ALIENS™

OMNIBUS

VOLUME 6

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DARK HORSE BOOKS®

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ALIENS™

OMNIBUS

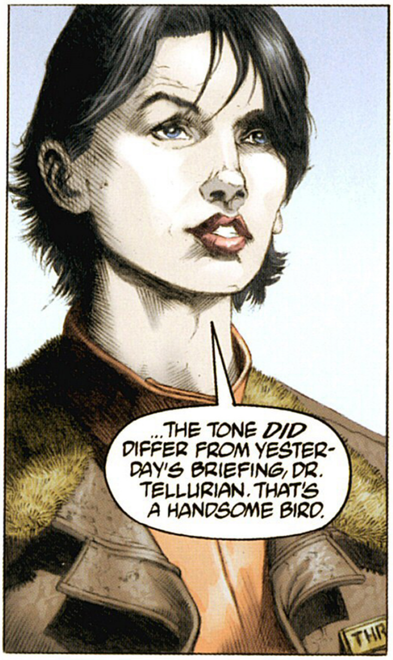
IT'S DONE.
THEY'RE ALL SECURED IN THE HOLD.

THANK YOU, MR. RHODES. GOOD JOB.
WELL...THIS IS IT. YOU UNDERSTAND, DON'T YOU, WHY YOU MUST STAY?
OF... OF COURSE.
I...WOULD BE A DANGER ON BOARD THE SAVANNAH... OUT OF PLACE... INAPPROPRIATE...
YES. YOU ARE A PART OF THIS WORLD NOW. YOU BELONG HERE.
NOW LET ME CHECK...
HMM. I THINK YOUR TIME IS SOON.
I ENVY YOU, MR. RHODES.
WE ENVY THE WONDROUS NEW LIFE THAT AWAITS YOU.
BE STRONG, MR. RHODES. BE OUR GUARDIAN, OUR SHIELD.
WE WILL SEE EACH OTHER AGAIN, SOMEDAY.

GUUUUH...
GAARGH

ALECTO THROOP! I'M VERY HAPPY YOU CHOSE TO COME!

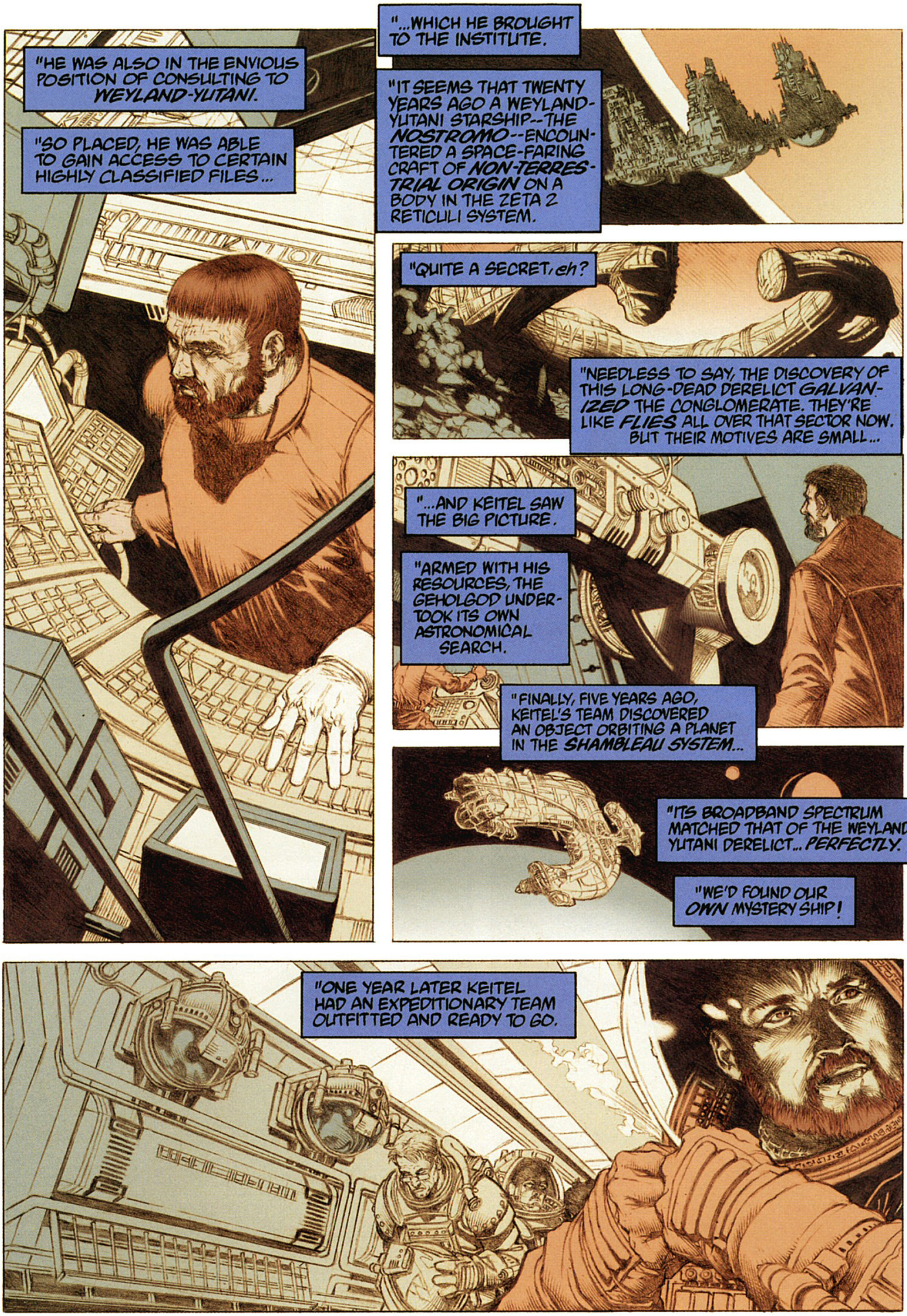
I WAS AFRAID THE MELODRAMATIC TONE OF MY REQUEST MIGHT DISSUADE YOU...
I WAS INTRIGUED...

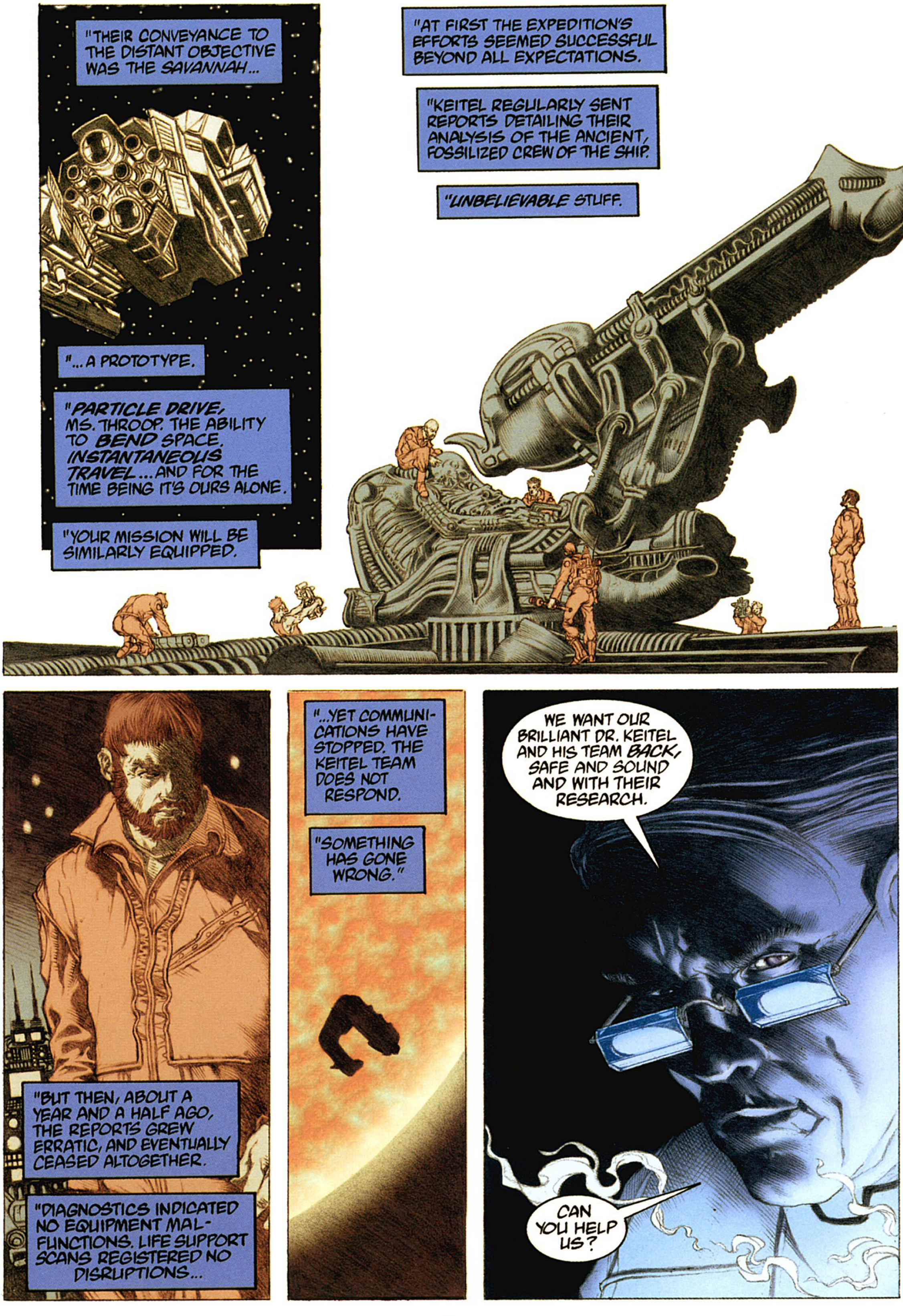

...THE TONE DID DIFFER FROM YESTER-DAY'S BRIEFING, DR. TELLURIAN. THAT'S A HANDSOME BIRD.

THIS IS WICKET... A GREAT GRAY.
HER KIND HUNTED THROUGHOUT WESTERN CANADA BEFORE THAT COUNTRY WAS CLEAR-CUT. WATCH...
YOU'LL GO FAR BEFORE ENCOUNTERING A SPECIES OF PREDATOR MORE FINELY ADAPTED, MORE EFFICIENT...
...MORE SURPRISING.
"SHE'S MONITORING THE FIELD... THERE! SHE'S FOUND HER LUNCH!
"THAT SNOWBANK IS AT LEAST FOUR FEET DEEP, MS. THROOP. THE FORCE OF WICKET'S IMPACT WAS DESIGNED TO SEND SHOCK WAVES ALL THE WAY TO THE BOTTOM."
THE GREAT GRAY HAS EVOLVED TO HUNT UNDER THE GRIMMEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES.
THEY HAVE DEVELOPED SENSES WHICH LOCATE PREY FAR BEYOND THE SCOPE OF OUR LIMITED FACILITIES.
LOOK! SHE'S BURROWED DOWN TO HER STUNNED QUARRY! HOW DOES SHE KNOW?!
SHE NEVER MISSES...

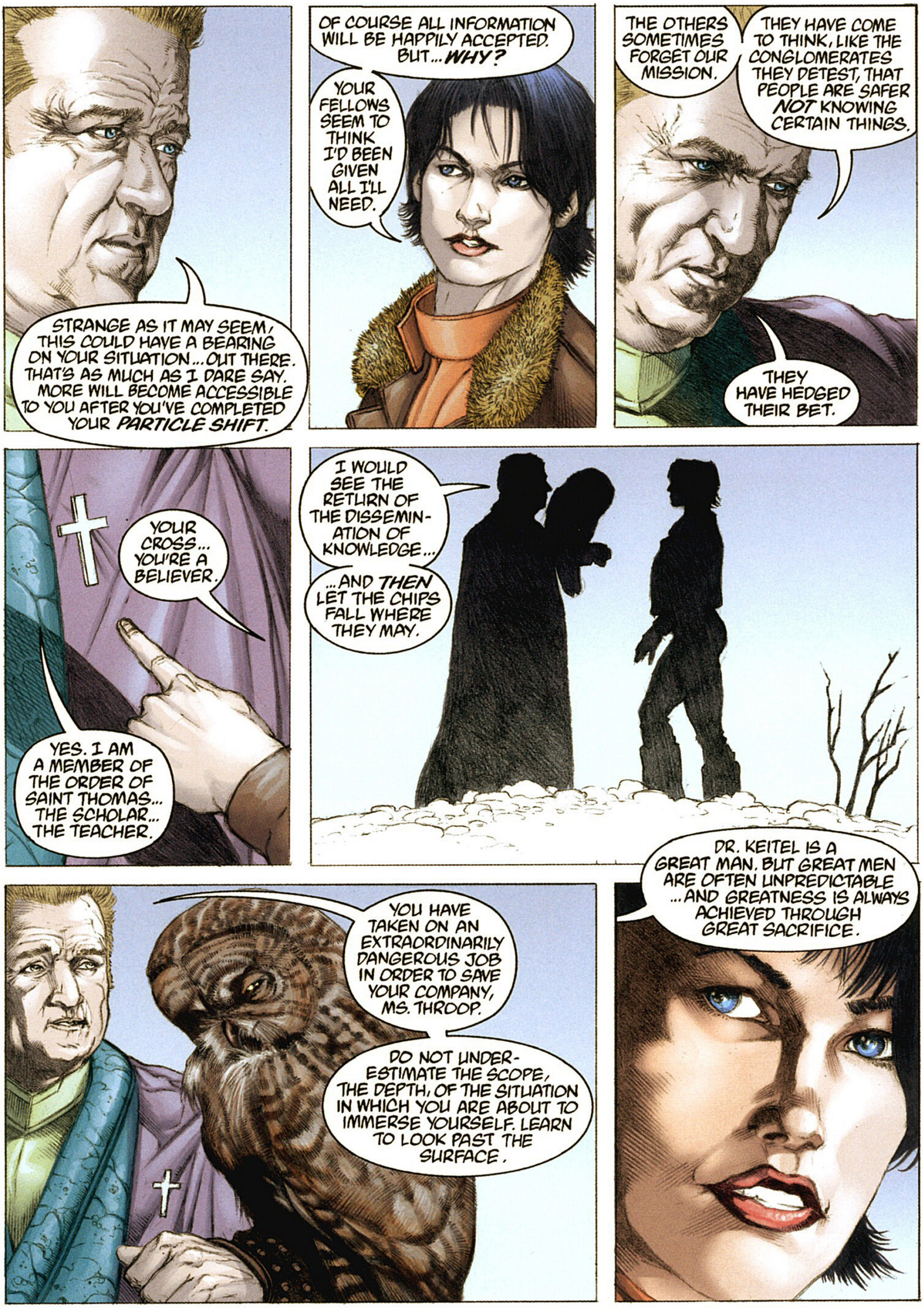
TRUE, THEY REMAIN IN THIS POOR, TWISTED WORLD BY OUR SUFFERANCES...
...BUT THEY CAN GO PLACES WE WILL NEVER KNOW.
DR. TELLURIAN, YOUR OWL IS FASCINATING...
BUT YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. AND WHY SHOULD YOU? VERY WELL. BEFORE YOU DISCOUNT ME ENTIRELY...
HUMOR ME A BIT MORE AND RECOUNT OUR MEETING YESTERDAY AT THE GEHOLGOD. YOUR RECOLLECTIONS.
I WAS CONTACTED BY YOUR COLLEAGUE, DR. FACTOR, THREE DAYS AGO.
HE SAID HE MIGHT HAVE A JOB FOR MY OUTFIT...
PLEASE COME IN, MS. THROOP. WELCOME TO THE GEHOLGOD INSTITUTE.
I AM DR. EMIL FACTOR, AND THESE ARE DRS. BURROUGHS, PRATYEKA, AND TELLURIAN.

THE INSTITUTE HAS A PROBLEM OF AN EXTREMELY CONFIDENTIAL NATURE, MS. THROOP...
I ASSURE YOU, DR. FACTOR, THAT THROOP RESCUE AND RECOVERY IS ALWAYS SENSITIVE TO THE CONCERNS OF...
THAT IS WITHOUT A DOUBT. YOUR COMPANY HAS BEEN THOROUGHLY RESEARCHED.
WE DID NOT PICK YOU OUT OF A PHONE BOOK.
THROOP RESCUE IS THE RARE PRIVATELY OWNED COMPANY THAT HAS SURVIVED IN THE FACE OF THE CONGLOMERATES.
WE WISH TO AVOID THE CONGLOMERATES...
BECAUSE MUCH OF THE INFORMATION THAT PREDICATED OUR PROBLEM WAS OBTAINED SOMEWHAT... SURREPTITIOUSLY FROM ONE OF THOSE MONSTERS.
THE GEHOLGOD IS A SCIENTIFIC VENTURE EXISTING IN THE SHADOWS OF THE CONGLOMERATES.
WE ARE DEDICATED TO THE BELIEF THAT RESEARCH IN THE NAME OF PURE SCIENCE IS STILL A WORTHWHILE PURSUIT.
PURE SCIENCE -- AS OPPOSED TO THE PROFIT-ORIENTED RESEARCH YOU OBTAINED?
YES, MS. THROOP. SOMETIMES WE MUST UNFORTUNATELY SINK TO THEIR LEVEL.
THIS IS DR. LUCIEN KEITEL.
LOOK AT HIM. HE IS A GREAT MAN.
A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE GEHOLGOD, HE IS A SEEKER, A MAN WITH THE VISION TO RESHAPE OUR WORLD.

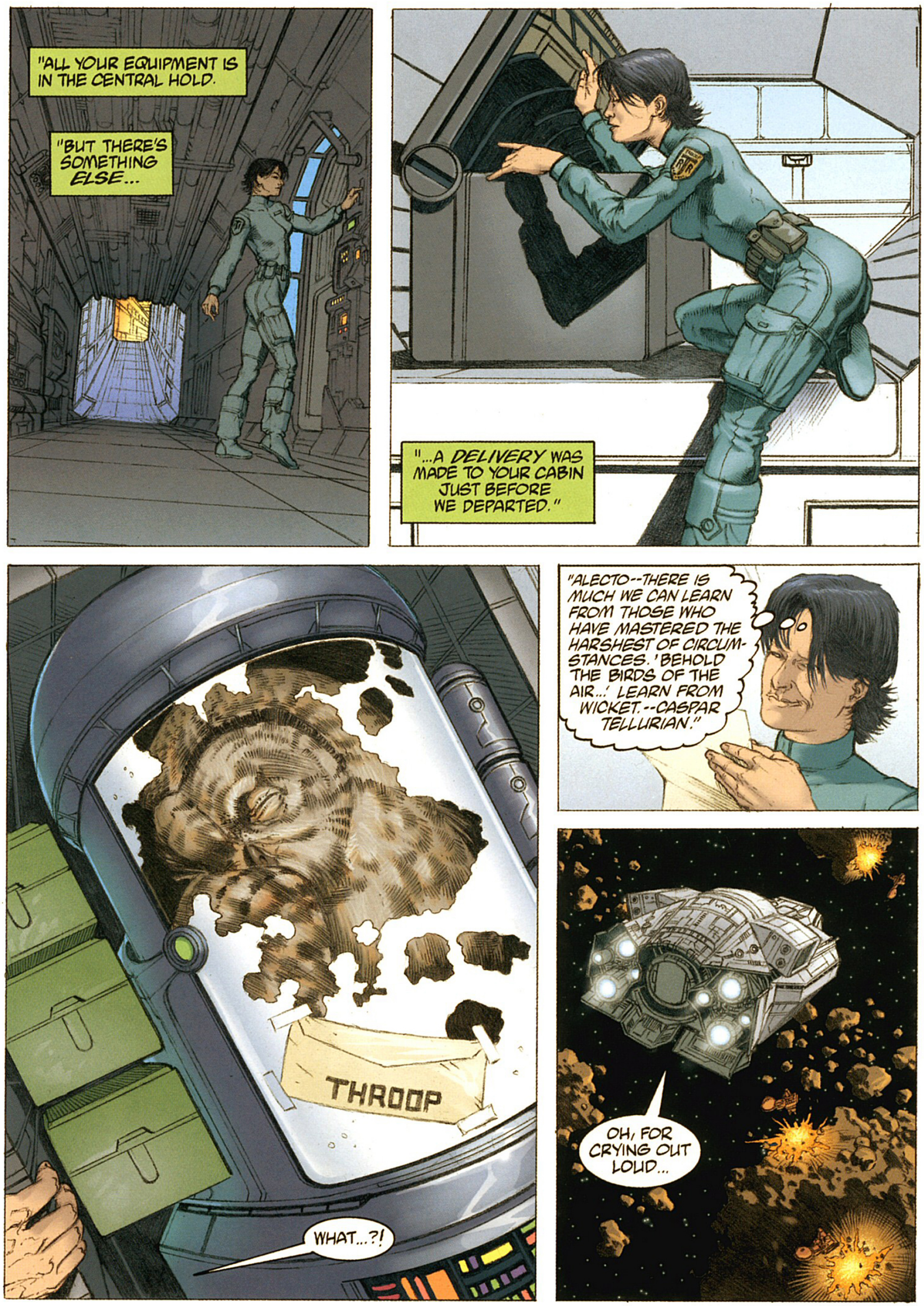

"HE WAS ALSO IN THE ENVIOUS POSITION OF CONSULTING TO WEYLAND-YUTANI.
"SO PLACED, HE WAS ABLE TO GAIN ACCESS TO CERTAIN HIGHLY CLASSIFIED FILES...
"...WHICH HE BROUGHT TO THE INSTITUTE.
"IT SEEMS THAT TWENTY YEARS AGO A WEYLAND-YUTANI STARSHIP--THE NOSTROMO--ENCOUNTERED A SPACE-FARING CRAFT OF NON-TERRESTRIAL ORIGIN ON A BODY IN THE ZETA 2 RETICULI SYSTEM.
"QUITE A SECRET, eh?
"NEEDLESS TO SAY, THE DISCOVERY OF THIS LONG-DEAD DERELICT GALVANIZED THE CONGLOMERATE. THEY'RE LIKE FLIES ALL OVER THAT SECTOR NOW. BUT THEIR MOTIVES ARE SMALL...
"...AND KEITEL SAW THE BIG PICTURE.
"ARMED WITH HIS RESOURCES, THE GEHOLGOD UNDERTOOK ITS OWN ASTRONOMICAL SEARCH.
"FINALLY, FIVE YEARS AGO, KEITEL'S TEAM DISCOVERED AN OBJECT ORBITING A PLANET IN THE SHAMBLEAU SYSTEM...
"ITS BROADBAND SPECTRUM MATCHED THAT OF THE WEYLAND-YUTANI DERELICT... PERFECTLY.
"WE'D FOUND OUR OWN MYSTERY SHIP!
"ONE YEAR LATER KEITEL HAD AN EXPEDITIONARY TEAM OUTFITTED AND READY TO GO.


"THEIR CONVEYANCE TO THE DISTANT OBJECTIVE WAS THE SAVANNAH...
"...A PROTOTYPE.
"PARTICLE DRIVE, MS. THROOP. THE ABILITY TO BEND SPACE. INSTANTANEOUS TRAVEL... AND FOR THE TIME BEING IT'S OURS ALONE.
"YOUR MISSION WILL BE SIMILARLY EQUIPPED.
"AT FIRST THE EXPEDITION'S EFFORTS SEEMED SUCCESSFUL BEYOND ALL EXPECTATIONS.
"KEITEL REGULARLY SENT REPORTS DETAILING THEIR ANALYSIS OF THE ANCIENT, FOSSILIZED CREW OF THE SHIP.
"UNBELIEVABLE STUFF.
"BUT THEN, ABOUT A YEAR AND A HALF AGO, THE REPORTS GREW ERRATIC, AND EVENTUALLY CEASED ALTOGETHER.
"DIAGNOSTICS INDICATED NO EQUIPMENT MALFUNCTIONS. LIFE SUPPORT SCANS REGISTERED NO DISRUPTIONS...
"...YET COMMUNICATIONS HAVE STOPPED. THE KEITEL TEAM DOES NOT RESPOND.
"SOMETHING HAS GONE WRONG."
WE WANT OUR BRILLIANT DR. KEITEL AND HIS TEAM BACK, SAFE AND SOUND AND WITH THEIR RESEARCH.
CAN YOU HELP US?

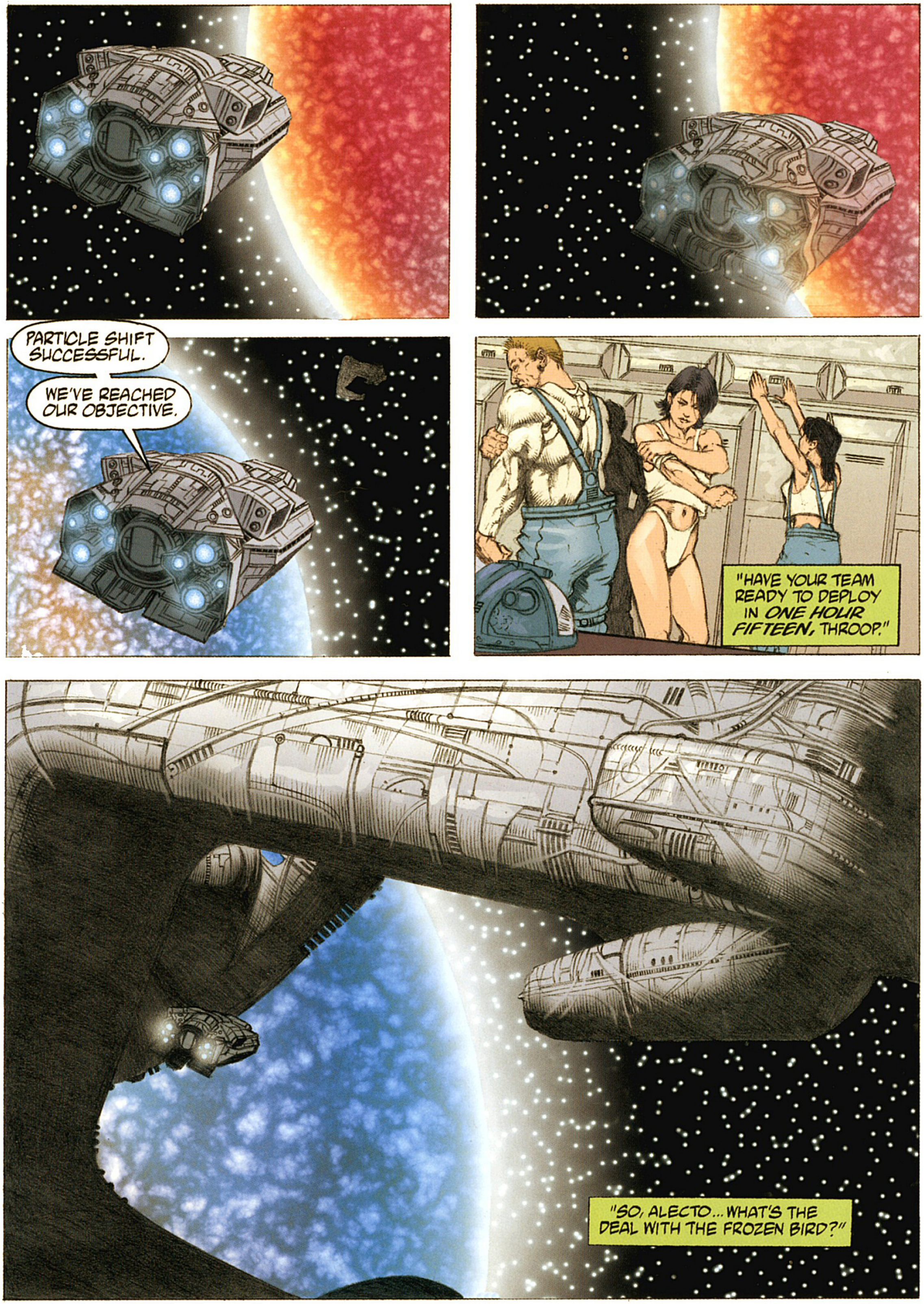
A BRILLIANT MAN... A GREAT MAN...AN AMBITIOUS MAN.
AND ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH THE BRIEFING YOU RECEIVED?
WELL, I KNOW THAT FACTOR WASN'T COMPLETELY FORTHCOMING.
THAT'S NOT UNUSUAL IN MY BUSINESS. AN OCCUPATIONAL HAZARD.
THROOP
MS. THROOP... UNDERSTAND THAT THERE IS VERY LITTLE I CAN TELL YOU...AT THIS TIME. CERTAIN SURGICALLY INSTALLED FAILSAFES PREVENT ME FROM SPEAKING FREELY.
AN OCCUPATIONAL HAZARD.
BUT BE AWARE THAT THERE IS MUCH MORE YOU NEED TO KNOW.
"THE REASON KEITEL LEFT FOR THE STARS...THE EXPEDITION'S HIDDEN MOTIVE...HAS ITS ORIGIN IN A PALEONTOLOGICAL DIG DEEP WITHIN AUSTRALIA'S GREAT SANDY DESERT...
"...WHERE, 26 YEARS AGO, A TEAM FUNDED BY THE GEHOLGOD DISCOVERED A STRATA OF SHALE THAT PREDATED BY A BILLION YEARS THE OLDEST PREVIOUSLY KNOWN FORMATIONS...
"IT WAS ETCHED WITH UNNERVINGLY ABUNDANT TRACES OF LIFE."

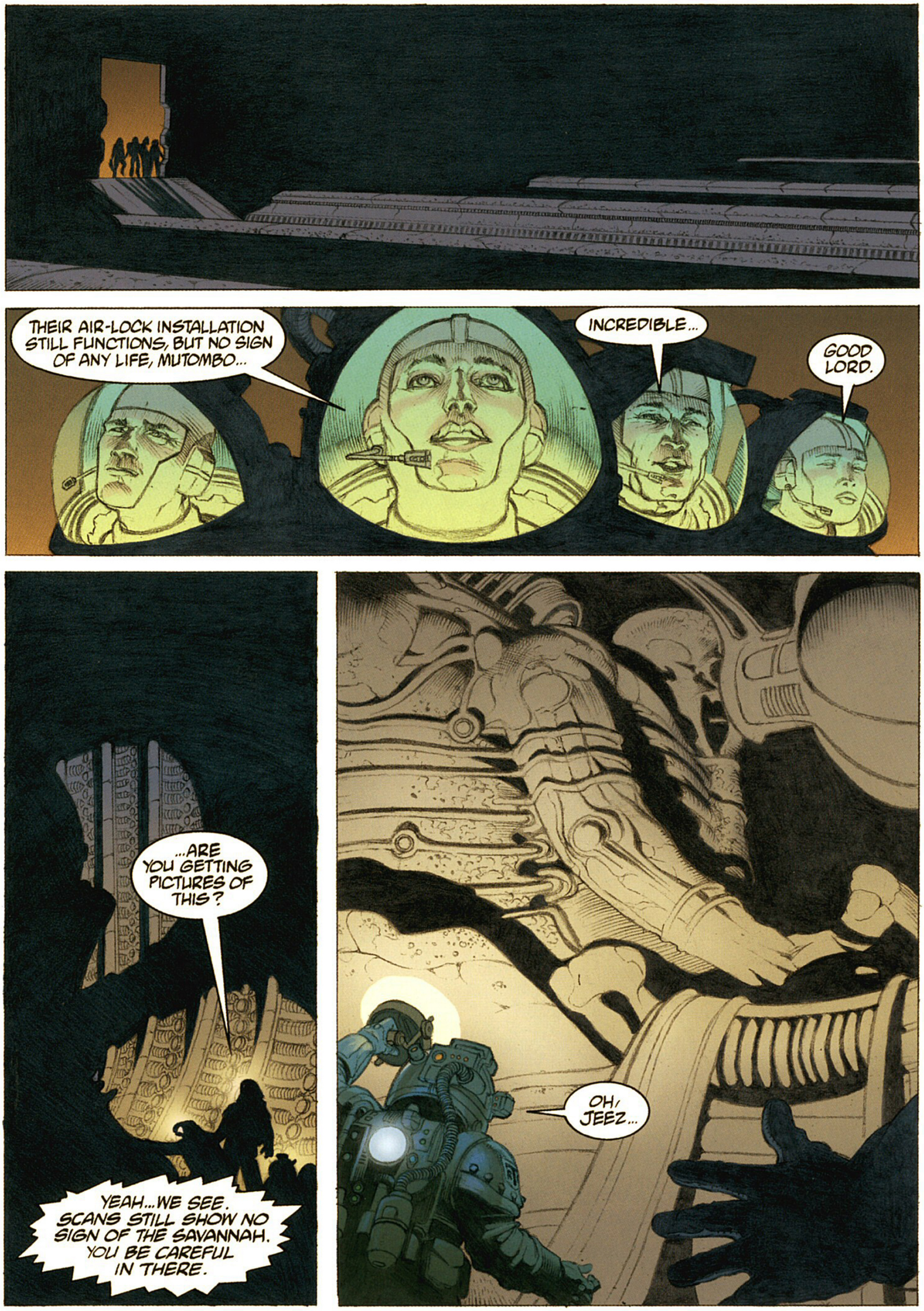

STRANGE AS IT MAY SEEM, THIS COULD HAVE A BEARING ON YOUR SITUATION... OUT THERE. THAT'S AS MUCH AS I DARE SAY. MORE WILL BECOME ACCESSIBLE TO YOU AFTER YOU'VE COMPLETED YOUR PARTICLE SHIFT.
OF COURSE ALL INFORMATION WILL BE HAPPILY ACCEPTED. BUT... WHY?
YOUR FELLOWS SEEM TO THINK I'D BEEN GIVEN ALL I'LL NEED.
THE OTHERS SOMETIMES FORGET OUR MISSION.
THEY HAVE COME TO THINK, LIKE THE CONGLOMERATES THEY DETEST, THAT PEOPLE ARE SAFER NOT KNOWING CERTAIN THINGS.
THEY HAVE HEDGED THEIR BET.
YOUR CROSS... YOU'RE A BELIEVER.
YES. I AM A MEMBER OF THE ORDER OF SAINT THOMAS... THE SCHOLAR... THE TEACHER.
I WOULD SEE THE RETURN OF THE DISSEMIN-ATION OF KNOWLEDGE...
...AND THEN LET THE CHIPS FALL WHERE THEY MAY.
YOU HAVE TAKEN ON AN EXTRAORDINARILY DANGEROUS JOB IN ORDER TO SAVE YOUR COMPANY, MS. THROOP.
DO NOT UNDER-ESTIMATE THE SCOPE, THE DEPTH, OF THE SITUATION IN WHICH YOU ARE ABOUT TO IMMERSE YOURSELF. LEARN TO LOOK PAST THE SURFACE.
DR. KEITEL IS A GREAT MAN. BUT GREAT MEN ARE OFTEN UNPREDICTABLE ...AND GREATNESS IS ALWAYS ACHIEVED THROUGH GREAT SACRIFICE.

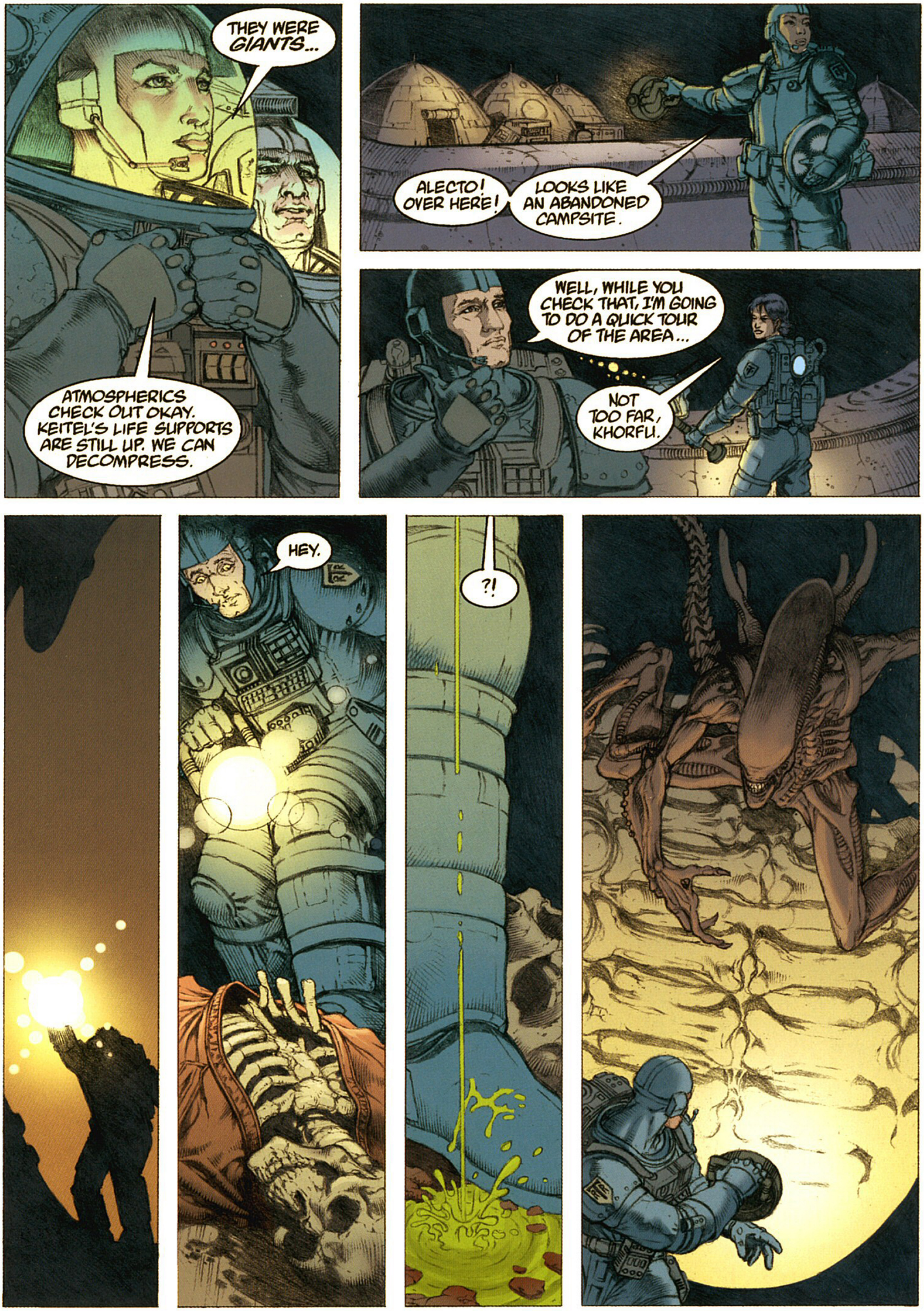
"GOOD LUCK, MS. THROOP.
"OUR CAPT. MUTOMBO WILL SEE YOU AND THE RACHEL SAFELY TO YOUR DESTINATION."
I'M NO EXPERT, BUT THE RACHEL DOESN'T LOOK PARTICULARLY ADVANCED TO ME, CAPT. MUTOMBO.
THE RACHEL DOESN'T WANT TO DRAW ATTENTION TO HERSELF. IT'S HER GUTS THAT MATTER.
HOLD HER STEADY, MR. MASSEY.
OKAY... NOW THAT WE'VE SLUNK OUT OF PORT...
LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO ARCH, BAAL, CAIN, AND DEIMOS... THE BEST ALL-PURPOSE SUPPORT SCIENCE CAN PROVIDE.
HEAR THAT, KHORFU... JELLICOE? MAYBE I CAN REPLACE YOU BOTH WITH SYNTHS SOMEDAY.
YOU ONLY BROUGHT TWO...?
ASSOCIATES. THEY'RE ENOUGH. OUR GEAR HAS BEEN STOWED?
THROOP


"ALL YOUR EQUIPMENT IS IN THE CENTRAL HOLD.
"BUT THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE...
"...A DELIVERY WAS MADE TO YOUR CABIN JUST BEFORE WE DEPARTED."
THROOP
WHAT...?!
"ALECTO--THERE IS MUCH WE CAN LEARN FROM THOSE WHO HAVE MASTERED THE HARSHEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES. 'BEHOLD THE BIRDS OF THE AIR...' LEARN FROM WICKET. --CASPAR TELLURIAN."
OH, FOR CRYING OUT LOUD...

ASTEROID L927... A WEYLAND-YUTANI MINING OPERATION... POINT 0-0-4 AND CLOSING...
I THOUGHT WE WERE AVOIDING ANY WEYLAND-YUTANI ACTIVITY.
WE'RE JUST GOING TO QUIETLY DRIFT BY...
...AND I'VE GOT MY REASONS.
BLAM!
AT CLOSE RANGE, SHORT-WAVE CONGLOMERATE BROADCASTS TEND TO FEEDBACK ON THEIR REPROGRAMMED HUNTER-SEEKER ANDROIDS.
AN OLD TRICK FOR DETECTING SYNTHETIC SPIES.
THE ANDROID WAS A PLANT?!
HAPPENS ALL THE TIME. CAN'T BE TOO CAUTIOUS. NOW I BELIEVE WE CAN BEND SPACE...


PARTICLE SHIFT SUCCESSFUL.
WE'VE REACHED OUR OBJECTIVE.
"HAVE YOUR TEAM READY TO DEPLOY IN *ONE HOUR FIFTEEN,* THROOP."
"SO, ALECTO... WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH THE FROZEN BIRD?"


THEIR AIR-LOCK INSTALLATION STILL FUNCTIONS, BUT NO SIGN OF ANY LIFE, MUTOMBO...
INCREDIBLE...
GOOD LORD.
...ARE YOU GETTING PICTURES OF THIS?
YEAH...WE SEE. SCANS STILL SHOW NO SIGN OF THE SAVANNAH. YOU BE CAREFUL IN THERE.
OH, JEEZ...


THEY WERE GIANTS...
ATMOSPHERICS CHECK OUT OKAY. KEITEL'S LIFE SUPPORTS ARE STILL UP. WE CAN DECOMPRESS.
ALECTO! OVER HERE!
LOOKS LIKE AN ABANDONED CAMPSITE.
WELL, WHILE YOU CHECK THAT, I'M GOING TO DO A QUICK TOUR OF THE AREA...
NOT TOO FAR, KHORFU.
HEY.
?!

KHORFU...? WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU?
DAMN. CAN'T RAISE KHORFU.
ALECTO... WOULD YOU TELL ME WHAT THE HELL THIS IS?
LOOKS TO ME LIKE...
OH, CRIPES... IT LOOKS LIKE A RELAY COMPLEX! HEY, MUTOMBO...
I THINK THERE'S SOME DECEPTION GOING ON ...WE'VE GOT A SIGNAL TRANSMISSION RELAY STATION HERE! I THINK THE KEITEL EXPEDITION'S BEEN BOUNCING THEIR REPORTS FROM SOME-WHERE ELSE THROUGH HERE! THEY'RE LONG GONE...
AAAIIEEE!
KHORFU!
NUTS! THAT WAS KHORFU!
BAAL...WITH ME! JELLICOE... STAND BY HERE!

WHERE IS HE...?
WE SHOULD HAVE FOUND HIM BY N...
OH, GOD...
THIS IS BAD.
JELLICOE! GET BACK INTO THE AIRLOCK! NOW!
ALECTO! WHAT'S HAP...
NO QUESTIONS! JUST DO AS I SAY!

THIS MAKES NO SENSE. WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?
I DON'T KNOW... BUT I CAN FEEL SOMETHING OUT THERE... WAITING...
TELLURIAN WAS TRYING TO WARN ME... DAMMIT... HE KNEW. HE...
HSSSSSS
THROOP?
THROOP! GET OUT...!

THROOP! WHAT IS YOUR STATUS?!
THROOP! CAN YOU READ ME?!
NO... NOT THAT WAY...

THROOP! WHAT IS YOUR STATUS?!
BOOBY-TRAP...
THIS WAS ALL RIGGED ...BOOBY-TRAPPED...
OH DEAR GO...
THROOP...!

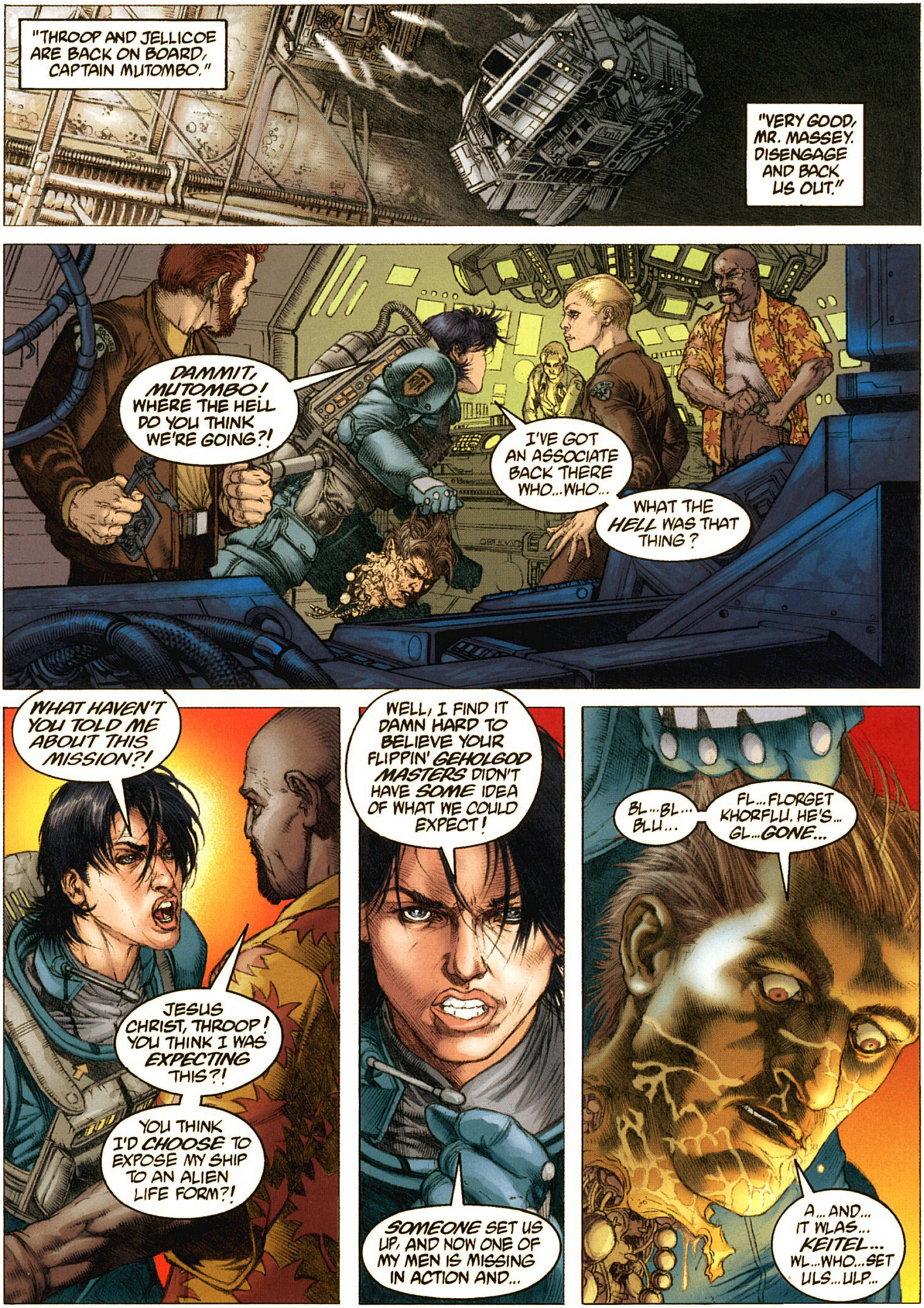
CLICK! CLICK! CLICK!
OH GOD! OH GOD!
THROOP'S BACK ON VISUAL! SHE'S OUTSIDE THE DOCK!
GOOD LORD! WHAT IS THAT... THING?!

GUCK...
GET ME A GUN! GET ME A #*@ GUN!! I'M GOING BACK OUT...

SKREEE!
THROOP! GET TO THE AIRLOCK!
QUICK! WHILE IT'S DISTRACTED!
UMPH!
HOLD ON... SHE'S MAKING FOR THE 'LOCK!
OPEN IT! OPEN THE DAMN 'LOCK!
SHE'S IN!
CLOSE IT! CLOSE IT!

GYAAAAH!
GOTTA GO BACK... GOTTA GET BAAL...
FOR CHRIST'S SAKE...YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS!
HE'S A SYNTH! LET HIM GO!
WE NEED HIM, MUTOMBO! WE NEED TO KNOW WHAT HE KNOWS!
THROOP! DON'T...
"WAIT... I THINK IT'S LEAVING...
"THIS IS MY CHANCE..."

DAMN.
DAMN.
DAMN.
DAMN!
EASY DOES IT... SMOOTHLY NOW...
...OHHH...
"WHERE ARE YOU, YOU..."
SKKK-RRREEEE!!
OH NO YOU DON'T, YOU DAMNED FILTHY SON OF A...

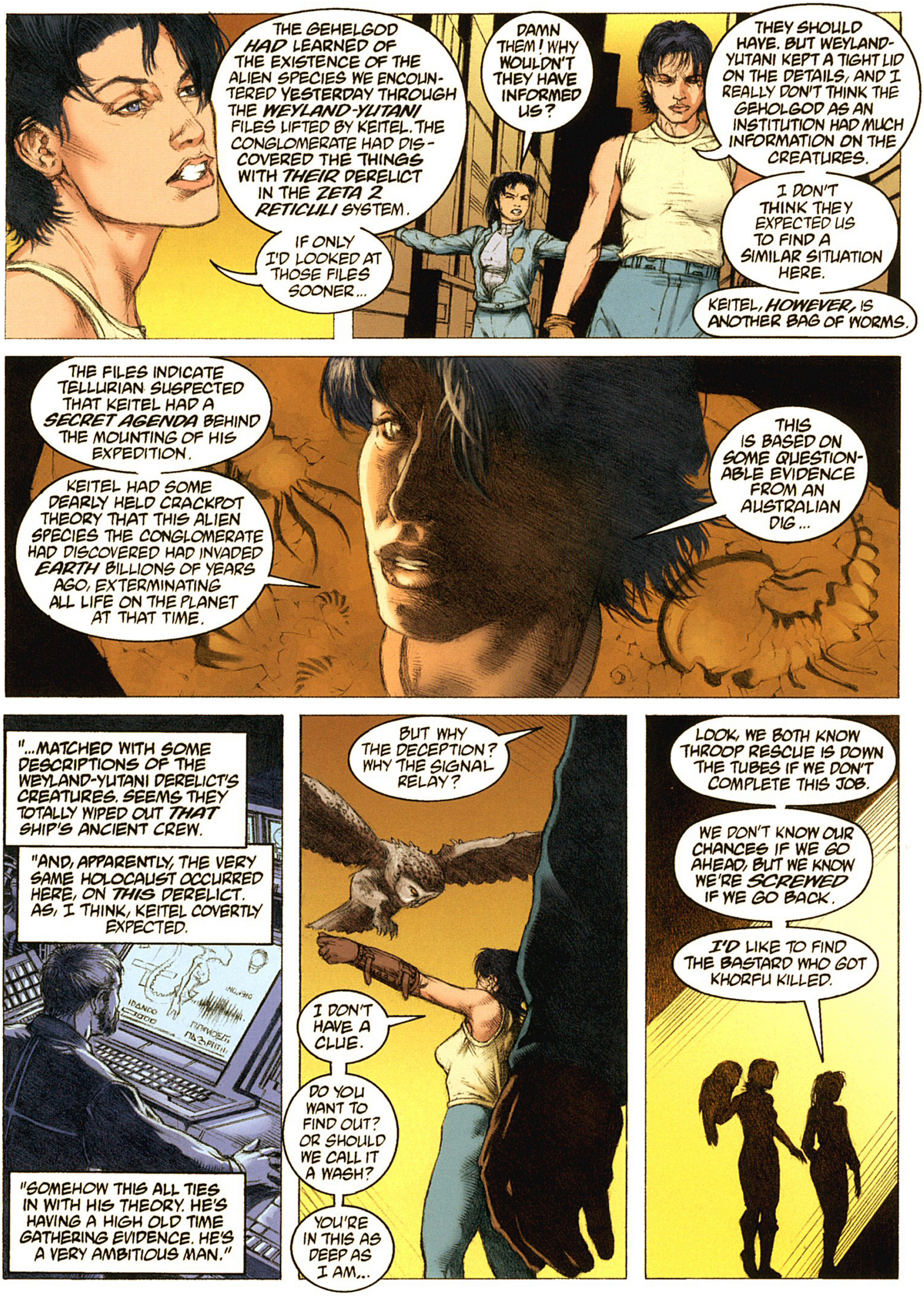

"THROOP AND JELLICOE ARE BACK ON BOARD, CAPTAIN MUTOMBO."
"VERY GOOD, MR. MASSEY. DISENGAGE AND BACK US OUT."
DAMMIT, MUTOMBO! WHERE THE HELL DO YOU THINK WE'RE GOING?!
I'VE GOT AN ASSOCIATE BACK THERE WHO...WHO...
WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT THING?
WHAT HAVEN'T YOU TOLD ME ABOUT THIS MISSION?!
JESUS CHRIST, THROOP! YOU THINK I WAS EXPECTING THIS?!
YOU THINK I'D CHOOSE TO EXPOSE MY SHIP TO AN ALIEN LIFE FORM?!
WELL, I FIND IT DAMN HARD TO BELIEVE YOUR FLIPPIN' GEHOLGOD MASTERS DIDN'T HAVE SOME IDEA OF WHAT WE COULD EXPECT!
SOMEONE SET US UP, AND NOW ONE OF MY MEN IS MISSING IN ACTION AND...
BL...BL... BLU...
FL...FLORGET KHORFLU. HE'S... GL...GONE...
A...AND... IT WLAS... KEITEL... WL...WHO...SET ULS...ULP...

B...BAAL?
KHORFU'S DEAD? YOU'RE SURE?
I...BL... BELIEVE...HE HLAS BECOME...A... SLORT OF...FL... FOOD SOURCE...
I...I...SLAW... SKKKZZZZZZ ...SLAW... SKKZZZZZ
WELL...THEN OUR BUSINESS HERE IS DONE. BUT THE MISSION IS STILL ON, AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED.
WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO TRACE SUB-SPACE SIGNALS BACK TO THEIR SOURCE...
WAIT A MINUTE...
I'VE ALREADY LOST AN ASSOCIATE TO THIS BOTCHED--
MY COMPANY SIGNED ON TO A RESCUE OPERATION... NOT A DAMN MANHUNT. IF KEITEL WANTS TO PLAY GAMES, I SAY LET HIM! BUT NOT WITH MY PEOPLE!
YOU SIGNED ON TO DO A JOB, THROOP!
IS THIS THE FIRST TIME YOU'VE EVER ENCOUNTERED A WRINKLE IN COMPLETING A MISSION?
FIRST CASUALTY? GET ON WITH IT, THROOP!
DAMN YOU, MUTOMBO...
GET BAAL BACK ONLINE. I'M GOING TO WANT TO DEBRIEF HIM.
HOW COULD THINGS GO SO WRONG?

TELLURIAN KNEW...
TELLURIAN KNEW...
TELLURIAN KNEW...

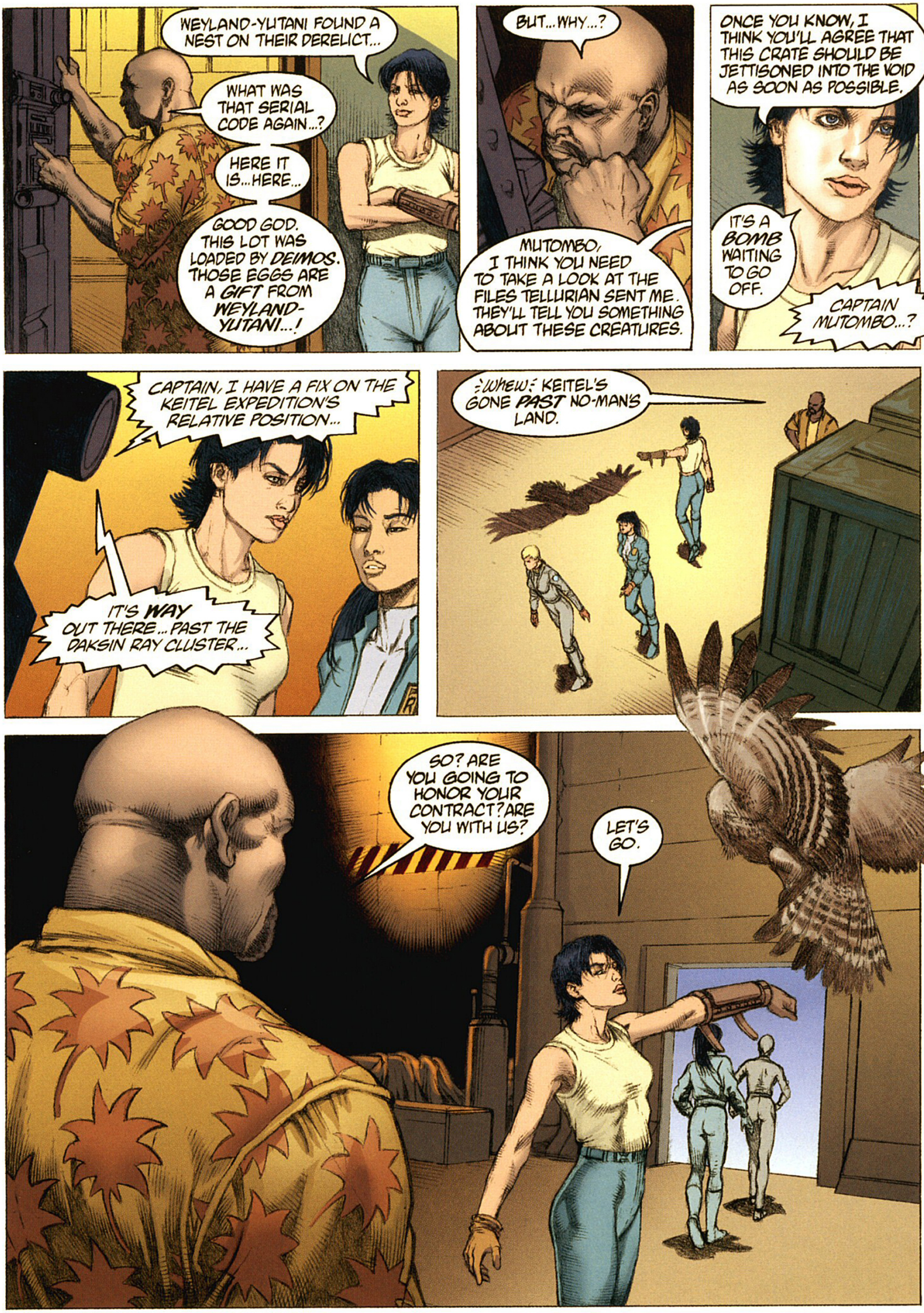
WHY'D YOU DEFROST THE BIRD?
OWL. A GREAT GRAY OWL. TELLURIAN CALLED HER WICKET... GOD KNOWS WHY.
HE PACKED HER OFF WITH ME BECAUSE HE SEEMS TO THINK THAT IF I STUDY HER HARD ENOUGH, IT'LL SOMEHOW HELP WITH THE MISSION.
AND AFTER WHAT HAPPENED YESTERDAY, I'M NOT SO INCLINED TO DISMISS THE OLD SOAK.
IS IT DANGEROUS?
YEAH. I THINK SHE IS.
SHE'S HUNGRY, TOO, I BET. TELLURIAN SUSPENDED A TON OF RODENTS FOR HER.
PULL ONE OUT FOR ME, WILL YOU...
IF HE KNEW WHAT WAS COMING, WHY DIDN'T HE JUST TELL YOU?
I DON'T THINK HE COULD...
HEY... SOMETHING'S GOT HER ATTENTION...
CAN'T SHE SEE HER DINNER'S OVER HERE?
OH, HELL! SHE JUST... LEAPED OFF MY ARM!
I KNEW THIS WASN'T A GOOD IDEA.
MY GOD! SHE'S MOVING THROUGH HERE LIKE SHE HAS RADAR!

SHE FOUND HER OWN DINNER!
GUESS IT SHOULDN'T SURPRISE ME. A SHIP'S A SHIP, AND SHIPS HAVE RATS.
OH, JEEZ! LOOK OUT!
IT'S OKAY! IT'S OKAY!
SHE'S SUPPOSED TO COME BACK!
...EXCEPT, ACCORDING TO THE FILE, SHE SHOULD HAVE RETURNED TO MY ARM...
I GUESS YOU DON'T LOOK ALL THAT STABLE.
SO...
...I SPENT MOST OF MY CABIN HOURS FILTERING THROUGH THE FILES TELLURIAN SLIPPED ME...
...THERE'S ACTUALLY WAY TOO MUCH TO PROCESS IN ONE SITTING...
...BUT I SAW ENOUGH TO UNDER-STAND THAT THERE'S A WHOLE LOT MORE TO THIS MISSION THAN WE WERE LED TO BELIEVE...
...AND EVERY-THING REVOLVES AROUND THE MYSTERIOUS DR. KEITEL.

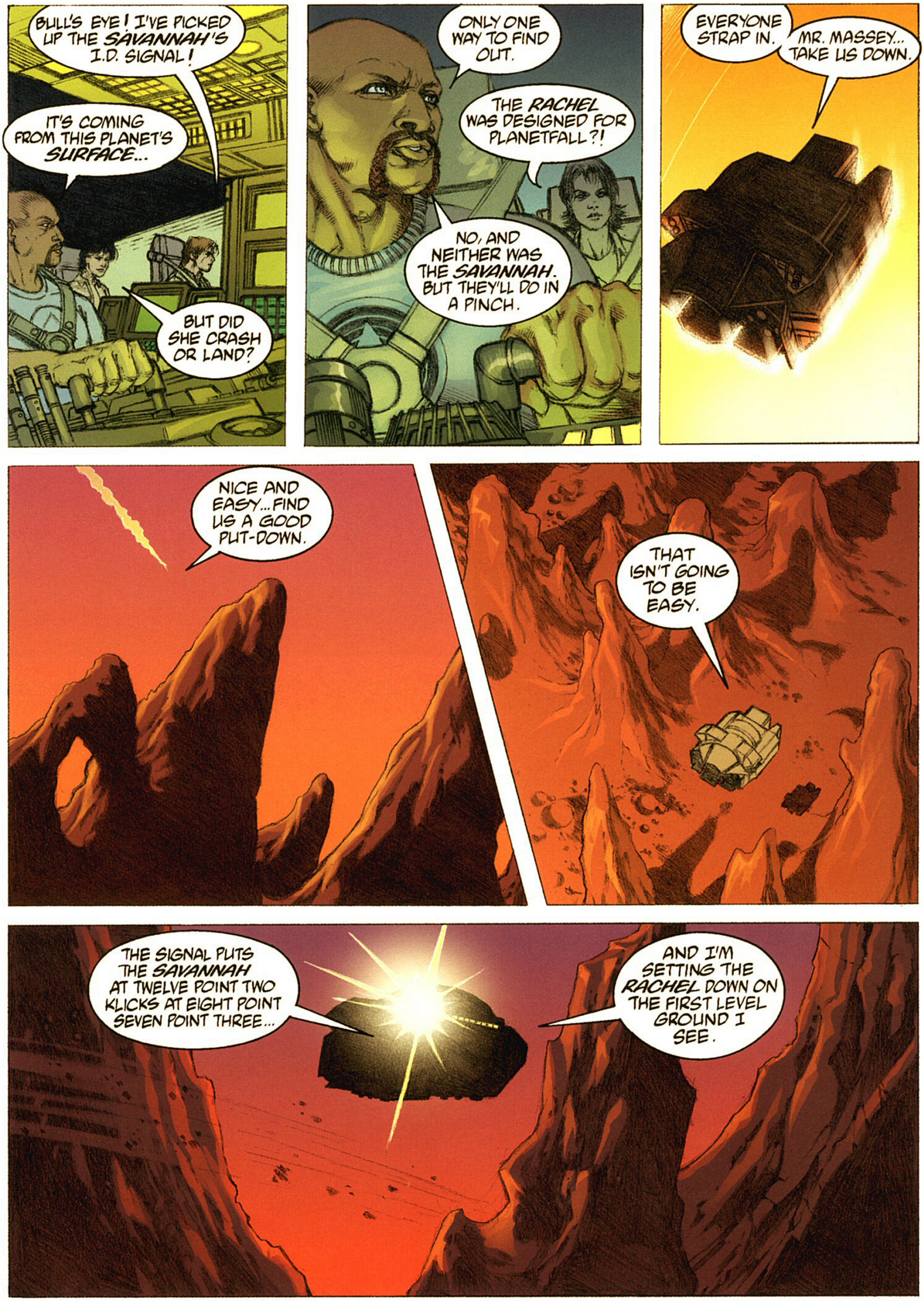

THE GEHELGOD HAD LEARNED OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE ALIEN SPECIES WE ENCOUNTERED YESTERDAY THROUGH THE WEYLAND-YUTANI FILES LIFTED BY KEITEL. THE CONGLOMERATE HAD DISCOVERED THE THINGS WITH THEIR DERELICT IN THE ZETA 2 RETICULI SYSTEM.
IF ONLY I'D LOOKED AT THOSE FILES SOONER...
DAMN THEM! WHY WOULDN'T THEY HAVE INFORMED US?
THEY SHOULD HAVE. BUT WEYLAND-YUTANI KEPT A TIGHT LID ON THE DETAILS, AND I REALLY DON'T THINK THE GEHOLGOD AS AN INSTITUTION HAD MUCH INFORMATION ON THE CREATURES.
I DON'T THINK THEY EXPECTED US TO FIND A SIMILAR SITUATION HERE.
KEITEL, HOWEVER, IS ANOTHER BAG OF WORMS.
THE FILES INDICATE TELLURIAN SUSPECTED THAT KEITEL HAD A SECRET AGENDA BEHIND THE MOUNTING OF HIS EXPEDITION.
KEITEL HAD SOME DEARLY HELD CRACKPOT THEORY THAT THIS ALIEN SPECIES THE CONGLOMERATE HAD DISCOVERED HAD INVADED EARTH BILLIONS OF YEARS AGO, EXTERMINATING ALL LIFE ON THE PLANET AT THAT TIME.
THIS IS BASED ON SOME QUESTIONABLE EVIDENCE FROM AN AUSTRALIAN DIG...
"...MATCHED WITH SOME DESCRIPTIONS OF THE WEYLAND-YUTANI DERELICT'S CREATURES. SEEMS THEY TOTALLY WIPED OUT THAT SHIP'S ANCIENT CREW.
"AND, APPARENTLY, THE VERY SAME HOLOCAUST OCCURRED HERE, ON THIS DERELICT. AS, I THINK, KEITEL COVERTLY EXPECTED.
"SOMEHOW THIS ALL TIES IN WITH HIS THEORY. HE'S HAVING A HIGH OLD TIME GATHERING EVIDENCE. HE'S A VERY AMBITIOUS MAN."
BUT WHY THE DECEPTION? WHY THE SIGNAL RELAY?
I DON'T HAVE A CLUE.
DO YOU WANT TO FIND OUT? OR SHOULD WE CALL IT A WASH?
YOU'RE IN THIS AS DEEP AS I AM...
LOOK, WE BOTH KNOW THROOP RESCUE IS DOWN THE TUBES IF WE DON'T COMPLETE THIS JOB.
WE DON'T KNOW OUR CHANCES IF WE GO AHEAD, BUT WE KNOW WE'RE SCREWED IF WE GO BACK.
I'D LIKE TO FIND THE BASTARD WHO GOT KHORFU KILLED.

OKAY, THEN. WE'LL--
HEY, YOUR BIRD'S GETTING ANTSY AGAIN...
1102
SHE REALLY WANTS WHATEVER'S IN THERE.
MUST BE SOMETHING ALIVE. MORE VERMIN?
MUTOMBO? YOU MIGHT WANT TO GET DOWN HERE TO CARGO. I THINK WE HAVE SOME STOWAWAYS...
Hmm. WE'LL JUST CRACK HER RIGHT OPEN, AND--
BASED ON THE SIZE OF THE RAT WE'VE ALREADY SEEN, I DON'T THINK YOU WANT TO DO THAT...

HMM. I DON'T RECOGNIZE THE SERIAL CODE.
WHAT'S WITH THE BIRD?
THE OWL IS DEALING WITH YOUR INFESTATION PROBLEM.
GUESS WE SHOULD HAVE A LOOK FIRST.
ARCH, BRING THAT X-RAY SCAN THINGA-MAJIG OVER HERE...
HOPE I CAN REMEMBER HOW TO WORK IT...
OKAY, I THINK I'VE GOT IT NOW...
WHAT THE HELL IS THIS?!
Gasp
THOSE ARE THE EGGS...THE LIVING EGGS...OF THE ALIEN CREATURE ...BACK ON THE DERELICT...
?!
I SAW A WHOLE NEST OF THEM... BACK ON THE DERELICT...
...AND TELLURIAN'S FILES DESCRIBE THEM...


WEYLAND-YUTANI FOUND A NEST ON THEIR DERELICT...
WHAT WAS THAT SERIAL CODE AGAIN...?
HERE IT IS...HERE...
GOOD GOD. THIS LOT WAS LOADED BY DEIMOS. THOSE EGGS ARE A GIFT FROM WEYLAND-YUTANI...!
BUT...WHY...?
MUTOMBO, I THINK YOU NEED TO TAKE A LOOK AT THE FILES TELLURIAN SENT ME. THEY'LL TELL YOU SOMETHING ABOUT THESE CREATURES.
ONCE YOU KNOW, I THINK YOU'LL AGREE THAT THIS CRATE SHOULD BE JETTISONED INTO THE VOID AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
IT'S A BOMB WAITING TO GO OFF.
CAPTAIN MUTOMBO...?
CAPTAIN, I HAVE A FIX ON THE KEITEL EXPEDITION'S RELATIVE POSITION...
IT'S WAY OUT THERE...PAST THE DAKSIN RAY CLUSTER...
:WHEW: KEITEL'S GONE PAST NO-MAN'S LAND.
SO? ARE YOU GOING TO HONOR YOUR CONTRACT? ARE YOU WITH US?
LET'S GO.

...ONCE I ESTABLISHED THE PERTINENT PARTICLE SPOOR, AND ELIMINATED ALL NON-ESSENTIAL PROBABILITIES, I WAS ABLE TO TRIANGULATE THE ORIGIN POINT USING FIXED TACHYON PERCENTAGES...
GOOD JOB, MR. MASSEY.
THIS IS UNEXPLORED SPACE...
BAAL...?
YES, THROOP. THANKS TO YOU, MY HEAD WAS SALVAGE-ABLE. THE OTHERS MANAGED TO REATTACH IT ADEQUATELY ENOUGH TO DEIMOS' UNDAM-AGED BODY.
BUT BE AWARE THAT THERE IS A DANGER THAT SUBVERSIVE SLEEPER DIRECTIVES MAY HAVE BEEN PRO-GRAMMED INTO DEIMOS' BODY BY WEYLAND-YUTANI.
I SHOULD BE MONITORED CLOSELY FOR SIGNS OF HOSTILE SYSTEMS OVERRIDE. I COULD PRESENT A THREAT.
THAT'S NOT VERY REASSURING.
EVERYONE PREPARE TO BEND SPACE!
HERE WE...
...GO!



BULL'S EYE! I'VE PICKED UP THE SAVANNAH'S I.D. SIGNAL!
IT'S COMING FROM THIS PLANET'S SURFACE...
BUT DID SHE CRASH OR LAND?
ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT.
THE RACHEL WAS DESIGNED FOR PLANETFALL?!
NO, AND NEITHER WAS THE SAVANNAH. BUT THEY'LL DO IN A PINCH.
EVERYONE STRAP IN.
MR. MASSEY... TAKE US DOWN.
NICE AND EASY... FIND US A GOOD PUT-DOWN.
THAT ISN'T GOING TO BE EASY.
THE SIGNAL PUTS THE SAVANNAH AT TWELVE POINT TWO KLICKS AT EIGHT POINT SEVEN POINT THREE...
AND I'M SETTING THE RACHEL DOWN ON THE FIRST LEVEL GROUND I SEE.

I'VE GOT OUR PUT-DOWN! BUT IT'S GOING TO BE TIGHT...
THROOP, AS SOON AS WE'RE DOWN I WANT OUR SEARCH TEAM READY TO GO AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
I DON'T WANT TO BE SITTING ON AN UNCHARTED WORLD ANY LONGER THAN IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY.
HOLY MOSES.
MASSEY...?
YEAH... WE SEE...

IT...IT HAS TO BE A CONSTRUCT...
WELL, WHAT-EVER IT IS, THE SIGNAL FIXES THE SAVANNAH DOWN ITS THROAT.
COULD THIS JOB GET ANY WORSE...?
DON'T LIKE THIS ONE BIT.
VISUALS, MASSEY?
GETTING A BIT DIM...
LOOK... STEPS!
GOOD LORD...WHAT ARE WE GETTING INTO...?
DON'T LIKE THIS ONE BIT.

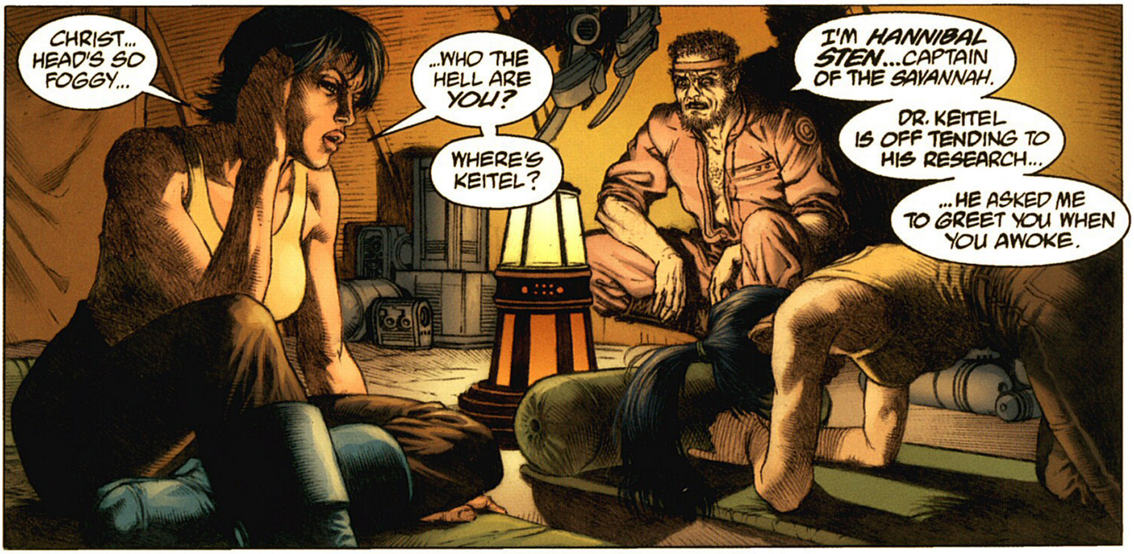
WE'RE ABOUT TO HIT BOTTOM...
...AND I THINK I SEE...
NOOOO!
THEY'RE HERE! THEY'RE HERE!!
POOM POOM POOM
JESUS, JELLICOE! COOL IT! THERE'S NOTHING THERE--
AAAIIEEE!

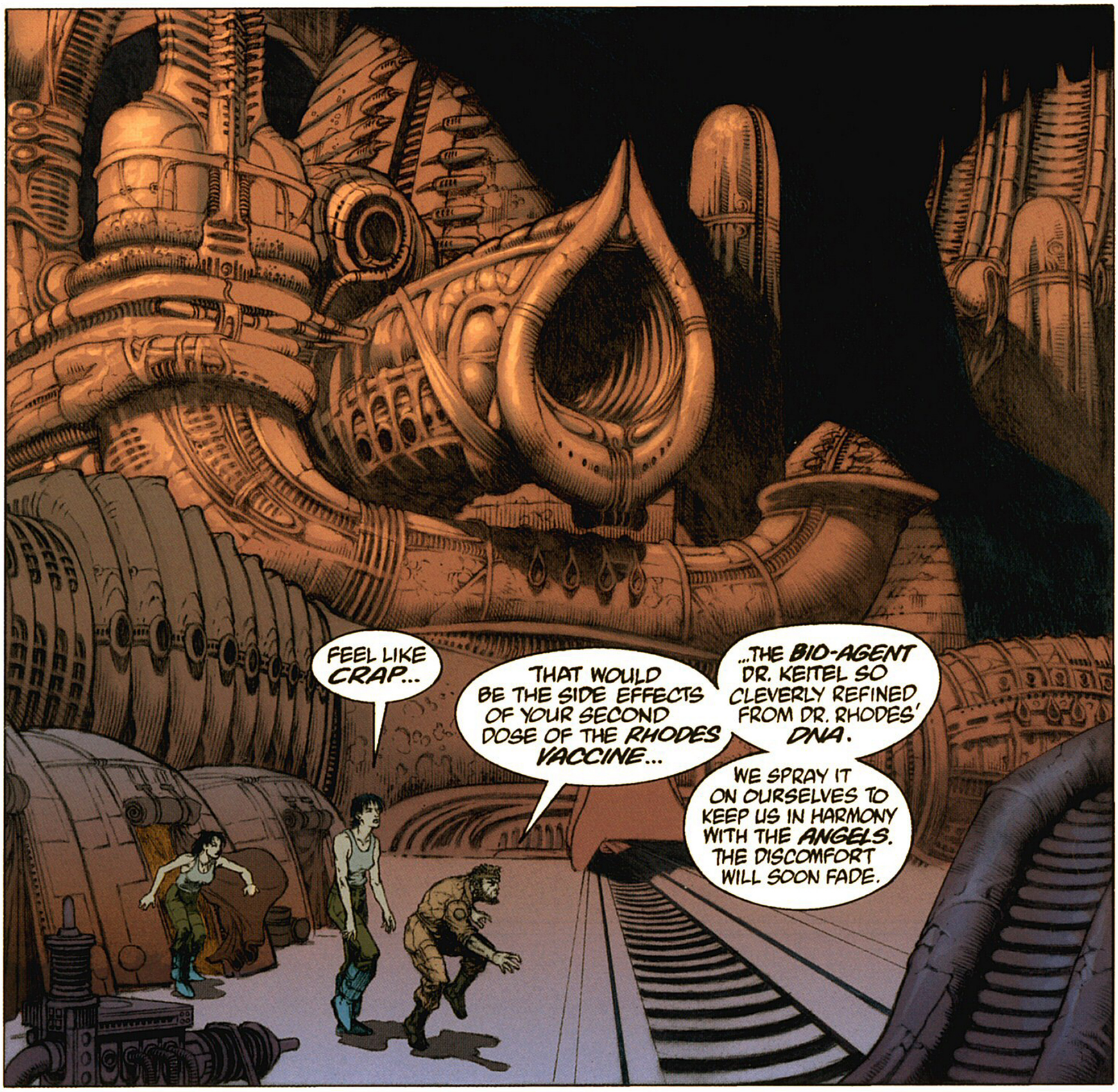
MUTOMBO!!
OH, GOD! OH, GOD!
POOM POOM POOM
GET BEHIND ME!
POOM POOM POOM

GKKKKKK!
GZZZZZ...
GZZZZZZZ...
THE RIFLES AREN'T GOING TO STOP THEM...
HOW DID I LET THINGS GO SO WRONG...?

GET BACK! GET BACK, YOU ANGELS OF THE OUTER GULFS!
THEY'RE NOT FOR YOU YET!
THEY'RE HERE TO SEE ME.
DON'T PANIC!
PLEASE TRUST ME...
...THIS IS ALL VERY NECESSARY.
WHA... WHAT...
...WHY...

MS. THROOP? ARE YOU BACK WITH US, MS. THROOP?
DR. KEITEL, I PRESUME...
WHY, YES, MS. THROOP...
...BUT PLEASE FORGIVE MY CRUDE WELCOME. I DIDN'T EXPECT YOU SO SOON, AND MY SUBJECTS' ***BEHAVIOR PATTERNS*** DON'T LEAVE TIME FOR NICETIES.
THE GAS TREATMENT I GAVE YOU WAS AN UNFORTUNATE ***NECESSITY.*** IT MAKES HUMAN LIFE POSSIBLE...
...***HERE***...IN MY LABORATORY.


CHRIST... HEAD'S SO FOGGY...
...WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?
WHERE'S KEITEL?
I'M HANNIBAL STEN...CAPTAIN OF THE SAVANNAH.
DR. KEITEL IS OFF TENDING TO HIS RESEARCH...
...HE ASKED ME TO GREET YOU WHEN YOU AWOKE.


FEEL LIKE CRAP...
THAT WOULD BE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF YOUR SECOND DOSE OF THE RHODES VACCINE...
...THE BIO-AGENT DR. KEITEL SO CLEVERLY REFINED FROM DR. RHODES' DNA.
WE SPRAY IT ON OURSELVES TO KEEP US IN HARMONY WITH THE ANGELS. THE DISCOMFORT WILL SOON FADE.

GOD. A CITY OF DEAD GIANTS...
THE ANGELS...?
YES... THE ANGELS. LINGUAFOEDA ACHERONSIS.
YOU'VE SEEN HOW THEY ATTEND TO LIFE THEY PERCEIVE AS OTHER.
IT IS A DIFFICULT LIFE OUT HERE. IN EIGHT HOURS YOU'LL HAVE TO UNDERGO ONE MORE TREATMENT BEFORE BECOMING PERMANENTLY IMMUNIZED...
THROOP...
...OH, GOOD LORD...
STAY CALM. THEY WON'T BOTHER WITH YOU.
YOUR SECOND DOSE IS STILL STRONG.

SEE? THE TREATMENT KEEPS YOU IN HARMONY WITH THEM.
BUT SOMETHING HAS CAUGHT THEIR ATTENTION...
THE GROUND'S SHAKING!
RRRRRRRRUUUMMBBLL
RRRUMMBLL
YOUR FOOL PILOT IS COMING DOWN THE PIT!
RRUMMBBLL
LOOK AT THE ANGELS...
...THIS IS NOT USUAL BEHAVIOR...
...THEY SENSE SOMETHING WITHIN...

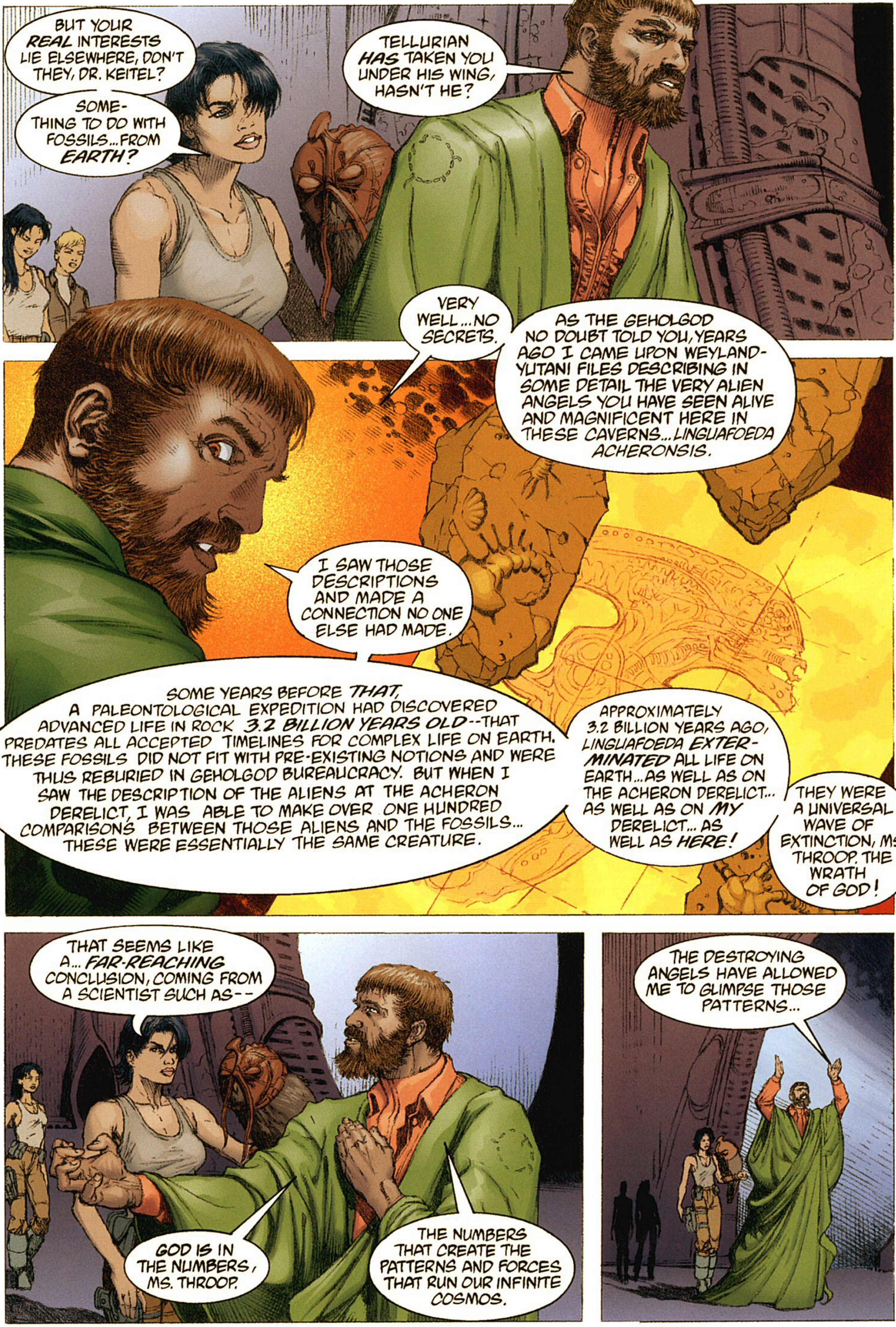
DOWN HERE, MASSEY! LOOK AT YOUR DAMN VIEW SCREEN!
ALL RIGHT, MASSEY...
WAIT! I DON'T THINK DR. KEITEL--
DON'T WORRY, WE'RE COMING BACK. NOW GET UP HERE...
N--NO...
CLOSE THE BAY, MASSEY!
HURRY!
HSSSSS
MASSEY... GOOD JOB...
WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED OUT THERE?! WHERE'S MUTOMBO AND THE SYNTH? THE CREATURES... THEY'RE HERE!
WHEN WE LOST CONTACT...
YOU DID RIGHT.
KEITEL'S HERE. AS YOU CAN SEE, HE'S GOT ATMOS-PHERICS UP.
MUTOMBO... IT DOESN'T LOOK GOOD FOR MUTOMBO. THE THINGS TOOK HIM.

OH, GOD... THE CAPTAIN...
...WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE...
EASY, MASSEY.
HE MAY BE ALIVE.
AND WE STILL HAVE OUR MISSION. EVEN THOUGH I'M NOT SO SURE THIS EXPEDITION WANTS RESCUING.
IT'S ALL VERY WEIRD.
LOOK... KEITEL DOSED JELLICOE AND ME WITH SOMETHING THAT KEEPS THOSE THINGS OFF OUR BACKS.
WE HAVE A CHANCE TO ROUND UP THESE PEOPLE --WILLINGLY OR NOT-- AND GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS MESS.
YOUR JOB IS TO STAND BY AND MAKE SURE THOSE THINGS DON'T GET ON BOARD THE RACHEL.
THAT HINKY BASTARD OUT THERE--STEN--THINKS THERE'S SOMETHING INSIDE THE RACHEL THAT'S ATTRACTING THEM.
I'M BETTING IT'S THE EGGS THAT WEYLAND-YUTANI HAD SMUGGLED ON BOARD.
WHAT ABOUT THIS STEN?
I DON'T THINK HE'S ALL THERE...
MASSEY, YOU JUST HOLD DOWN THE FORT, AND WAIT FOR US TO GET BACK.
WE'RE GOING TO FIND MUTOMBO... AND GET SOME ANSWERS FROM KEITEL.
ARCH WILL COME WITH JELLICOE AND ME. BAAL WILL STAY WITH THE SHIP.
HOLD ON A MINUTE... THERE'S SOMEONE ELSE I WANT OUT THERE WITH US...

OKAY, WE'RE OUT!
CLOSE HER UP!
HSSSSSSSs
DAMMIT...!
GET THE HOOD ON HER!
I THOUGHT THIS MIGHT HAPPEN...SHE DOESN'T LIKE THE ADULTS ANY MORE THAN THE EGGS...
HE'S BACK...
...KEITEL.

YOU SEE, MR. STEN? I KNEW THEY'D BE BACK. THEY CAME TO TALK TO *ME*.
BUT THIS *OWL*, MS. THROOP...
...COULD MY DEAR FRIEND *CASPAR TELLURIAN* BE SENDING ME A MESSAGE?
DR. TELLURIAN THOUGHT *I* MIGHT BENEFIT FROM WICKET'S COMPANY...
I SEE... OF COURSE.
YOUR PILOT WAS FOOLISH TO RISK YOUR SHIP DOWN HERE, MS. THROOP.
INTERESTING... THE ANGELS SEEM INORDINATELY EAGER TO GAIN ACCESS...
DR. KEITEL, YOU SEEM TO BE VERY FAMILIAR WITH THESE... ANGELS. OUR CAPTAIN MUTOMBO--
THE MAN THE ANGELS ATTENDED TO BEFORE I ARRIVED?
I'M SORRY... HE'S PAST HELP. I REGRET I COULD NOT GET TO YOU SOONER...
JESUS...
I WANT TO SEE HIM...
I'M AFRAID I COULDN'T EVEN *BEGIN* TO SUGGEST WHERE TO LOOK FOR WHATEVER IS LEFT OF HIM.
BUT I WOULD BE *MORE* THAN HAPPY TO TOUR YOU THROUGH MY DOMAIN--THIS ANCIENT AND FANTASTIC NECROPOLIS--AND DO MY BEST TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS.
MR. STEN, YOU STAY HERE AND MAKE SURE NO *MAYHEM* BEFALLS THE GEHOLGOD SHIP.

I MUST CONGRATULATE YOU ON YOUR DETECTIVE WORK.
I KNEW THE GEHOLGOD WOULD SEND SOMEONE VIA PARTICLE DRIVE, BUT I DID NOT EXPECT TO BE TRACED THIS QUICKLY.
WHY THE DECEPTION? WHY HIDE YOUR RELOCATION TO THIS WORLD?
IT WAS NECESSARY. THE RULES ARE DIFFERENT OUT HERE.
YOU'LL UNDERSTAND SOON ENOUGH.
WELL THEN, WHAT LED YOU HERE?
THE CREW OF THE DERELICT...
"...THEY LEFT US A FANTASTICALLY DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THEIR JOURNEY.
"DR. NELLIGAN, MY LINGUISTICS EXPERT, WAS ABLE TO CRACK *SOME* OF IT...
"...ENOUGH TO REPROGRAM THE *SAVANNAH'S* RUDDER, AND BRING US *HERE*.
"THIS WAS MY DERELICT'S PORT OF DEPARTURE. ONE OF PERHAPS *THOUSANDS* OF WORLDS THESE MYSTERIOUS GIANTS COLONIZED."


BUT YOUR REAL INTERESTS LIE ELSEWHERE, DON'T THEY, DR. KEITEL?
SOME-THING TO DO WITH FOSSILS... FROM EARTH?
TELLURIAN HAS TAKEN YOU UNDER HIS WING, HASN'T HE?
VERY WELL... NO SECRETS.
AS THE GEHOLGOD NO DOUBT TOLD YOU, YEARS AGO I CAME UPON WEYLAND-YUTANI FILES DESCRIBING IN SOME DETAIL THE VERY ALIEN ANGELS YOU HAVE SEEN ALIVE AND MAGNIFICENT HERE IN THESE CAVERNS... LINGUAFOEDA ACHERONSIS.
I SAW THOSE DESCRIPTIONS AND MADE A CONNECTION NO ONE ELSE HAD MADE.
SOME YEARS BEFORE THAT, A PALEONTOLOGICAL EXPEDITION HAD DISCOVERED ADVANCED LIFE IN ROCK 3.2 BILLION YEARS OLD--THAT PREDATES ALL ACCEPTED TIMELINES FOR COMPLEX LIFE ON EARTH. THESE FOSSILS DID NOT FIT WITH PRE-EXISTING NOTIONS AND WERE THUS REBURIED IN GEHOLGOD BUREAUCRACY. BUT WHEN I SAW THE DESCRIPTION OF THE ALIENS AT THE ACHERON DERELICT, I WAS ABLE TO MAKE OVER ONE HUNDRED COMPARISONS BETWEEN THOSE ALIENS AND THE FOSSILS... THESE WERE ESSENTIALLY THE SAME CREATURE.
APPROXIMATELY 3.2 BILLION YEARS AGO, LINGUAFOEDA EXTER-MINATED ALL LIFE ON EARTH... AS WELL AS ON THE ACHERON DERELICT... AS WELL AS ON MY DERELICT... AS WELL AS HERE!
THEY WERE A UNIVERSAL WAVE OF EXTINCTION, MS. THROOP. THE WRATH OF GOD!
THAT SEEMS LIKE A... FAR-REACHING CONCLUSION, COMING FROM A SCIENTIST SUCH AS--
GOD IS IN THE NUMBERS, MS. THROOP.
THE NUMBERS THAT CREATE THE PATTERNS AND FORCES THAT RUN OUR INFINITE COSMOS.
THE DESTROYING ANGELS HAVE ALLOWED ME TO GLIMPSE THOSE PATTERNS...

YOUR FAMILIAR SENSES SOMETHING IN THE SHADOWS.
LOOSE HER.
DON'T WORRY... THE ANGELS ARE NOT HERE.
"...EVIDENCE OF A PAST FEATURING EXTINCTION ON A COSMIC SCALE...
"...A PAST MY FELLOWS OFFICIALLY DISMISS, BUT SECRETLY FEAR."
SINCE THE GEHOLGOD WOULD NOT SUPPORT MY RE-SEARCH, I WAS FORCED TO USE SUBTERFUGE TO ATTAIN MY GOALS.
AND MY MEANS HAVE BEEN JUSTIFIED. OUT HERE, I HAVE GATHERED IRREFUTABLE EVIDENCE...
RATTUS NORVEGICUS.
WE BRING MANY FAMILIARS WITH US TO NEW WORLDS, AND OFTEN THEY COLONIZE MUCH FASTER THAN WE.
MS. THROOP, DESPITE THE FACT THAT I SEEM TO DWELL ON THE PAST, IT'S THE FUTURE IN WHICH I'M MOST INTERESTED...
DR. KEITEL...
...AND THE FACT THAT THE ANCIENT DESTROYERS OF WORLDS STILL EXIST TODAY POINTS TO OUR FUTURE.
...WHERE ARE THE REST OF YOUR MEN?
SOON ENOUGH, MS. THROOP.
FIRST, I MUST SHOW YOU SOME-THING THAT TRULY CHALLENGES OUR CONCEPT OF TIME...

WOULD YOU LOOK AT THIS FRUITCAKE, BAAL? I THINK HE WANTS IN...
YOU WHAT...?!
JESUS CHRIST, BAAL!
ACTUALLY, MR. MASSEY, I JUST OPENED THE BAY. I ASSUMED HE WAS TO BE--
CLOSE IT, BEFORE...!
OF COURSE... IT'S CLOSED.
BUT, I'M SORRY... STEN IS ABOARD.
#@!¢%!! I DID NOT WANT ANY OF THESE CRAZY BASTARDS ON THE SHIP UNTIL THROOP GOT BACK!
WHAT THE HELL WERE YOU THINKING?
CLICK

HOW ABOUT YOU? YOU WANT TO TRY ME?
NOT AT ALL...
WHAT DO YOU WANT HERE?
THE EGGS...
I KNOW THEY'RE SOMEWHERE IN THIS SHIP... I SAW THE WAY THE ANGELS REACTED...
OF COURSE. FOLLOW ME...
...I WON'T GIVE YOU ANY TROUBLE.
YOU'RE A SYNTH, AREN'T YOU?
YOU WOULDN'T UNDER-STAND...
THE ONLY WAY FOR A HUMAN TO SURVIVE OUT HERE IS TO BECOME THEM...
KEITEL SHOWED US HOW... BUT SOME OF THE EGGS WE BROUGHT... THEY WERE INFERTILE...
...KEITEL TOLD ME TO BE PATIENT... I'D GET MY DUE, JUST LIKE THE OTHERS...

BUT I CAN'T WAIT ANY LONGER...
YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND ...WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO BE LEFT BEHIND...
I KNOW THEY'RE HERE...
IN HERE.
OH, GOD...
KEITEL'S MAD, YOU KNOW.
HE'S SEEN THE WHEELS AND THE GEARS THAT TURN THE UNIVERSE...
...I WANT TO GO MAD, TOO.
OH, GOD! IT'S TRUE!
THE EGGS OF THE CELESTIAL HOST! MY SALVATION IS COME...
RECEIVE ME...TAKE ME...RAISE ME U--
UUULK!

SON OF A BI--
POOM! POOM! POOM!
WHAT...?
FOR GOD'S SAKE, BAAL! HELP ME!
HELP M--
GUCK!

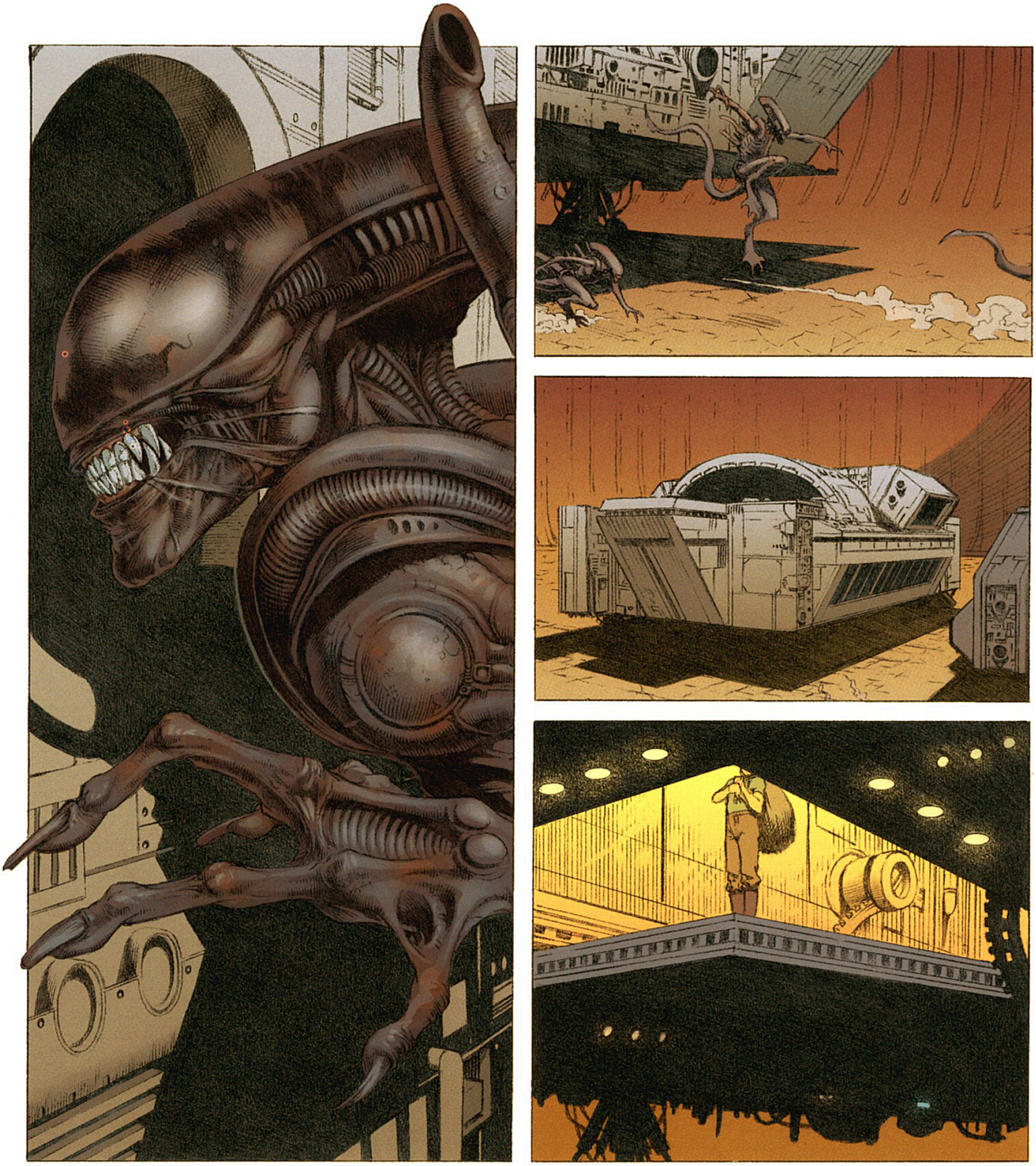
IT'S... ALIVE?
JUST BARELY.
ALL THE GIANTS IN THIS CAREFULLY SEALED CHAMBER WERE SUBJECTED TO SOME FORM OF CATATONIC SUSPENSION. I CAN'T EVEN BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND THE PROCESS... IT APPARENTLY WORKS ON A MOLECULAR LEVEL. ASTONISHING.
I BELIEVE THAT, WITH THEIR RACE ON THE VERGE OF EXTERMINATION BY THE ANGELS, THE GIANTS RESORTED TO THIS... AN ATTEMPT TO HIBERNATE AND OUTLAST THEIR DESTROYERS.
TIME, HOWEVER, DID THEM IN... ALL EXCEPT THIS ONE.
AND HE HAS YET TO OUTLAST THE ANGELS.
A SCIENCE THAT HAS KEPT A BEING ALIVE FOR OVER THREE BILLION YEARS.
IMAGINE THAT.
AND IN ALL THAT TIME, YOUR DESTROYING ANGELS NEVER MANAGED TO BREAK INTO THIS CHAMBER?
OH, THE ORIGINAL HOST OF ANGELS... THOSE THAT ERADICATED THIS RACE... ARE LONG GONE.
THEIR EGGS DID NOT FARE WELL OVER THE AGES ON THIS PLANET.

THE ANGELS HERE NOW ARE RECENT COLONISTS.
I BROUGHT THEM WITH ME FROM THE DERELICT.
?!!
AS EGGS, OF COURSE.
I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH TIME RHODES ALLOWED YOU, BUT YOU MIGHT HAVE NOTICED THAT THE DERELICT IS RIFE WITH THEM.
BUT... I KNOW THOSE THINGS NEED A HOST TO DEVELOP WITHIN... A LIVING INCUBATOR...
RHODES...?
...IF YOU BROUGHT THE EGGS TO THIS DEAD PLANET...
...DR. KEITEL... WHERE ARE YOUR MEN?
YOU MET THEM WHEN YOU ARRIVED, MS. THROOP...
THE SOULS OF NELLIGAN, GRINKOFF, REDGRAVE, ITO, PARRIOTTI, AND JOYCE...
...GRANTED ETERNAL LIFE IN THE CELESTIAL CORPORA OF THE DESTROYING ANGELS.

"I SHOWED THEM THE WAY, AND THEY WENT GLADLY TO A GLORIOUS DESTINY, ALLOWING THE ANGELS TO *BIRTH*... AND AFFORDING ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY THE *LIVING* ORGANISM!
"THEIR SACRIFICE SERVES THE ANGELS *AND* SCIENCE!"
YOU SICK, MANIPULATIVE SO--
SHUT UP, JELLICOE... TELL ME MORE ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR MEN, DOCTOR...
NO...
NO. I FEAR I'VE SAID TOO MUCH ALREADY...
DAMN YOU!
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND AT ALL, DO YOU?!
HE'S GOING TO BOLT!
YOUR SOCIETAL CONVENTIONS MEAN *NOTHING* OUT HERE!
OOOF!
I LEAVE YOU TO THE ANGELS...

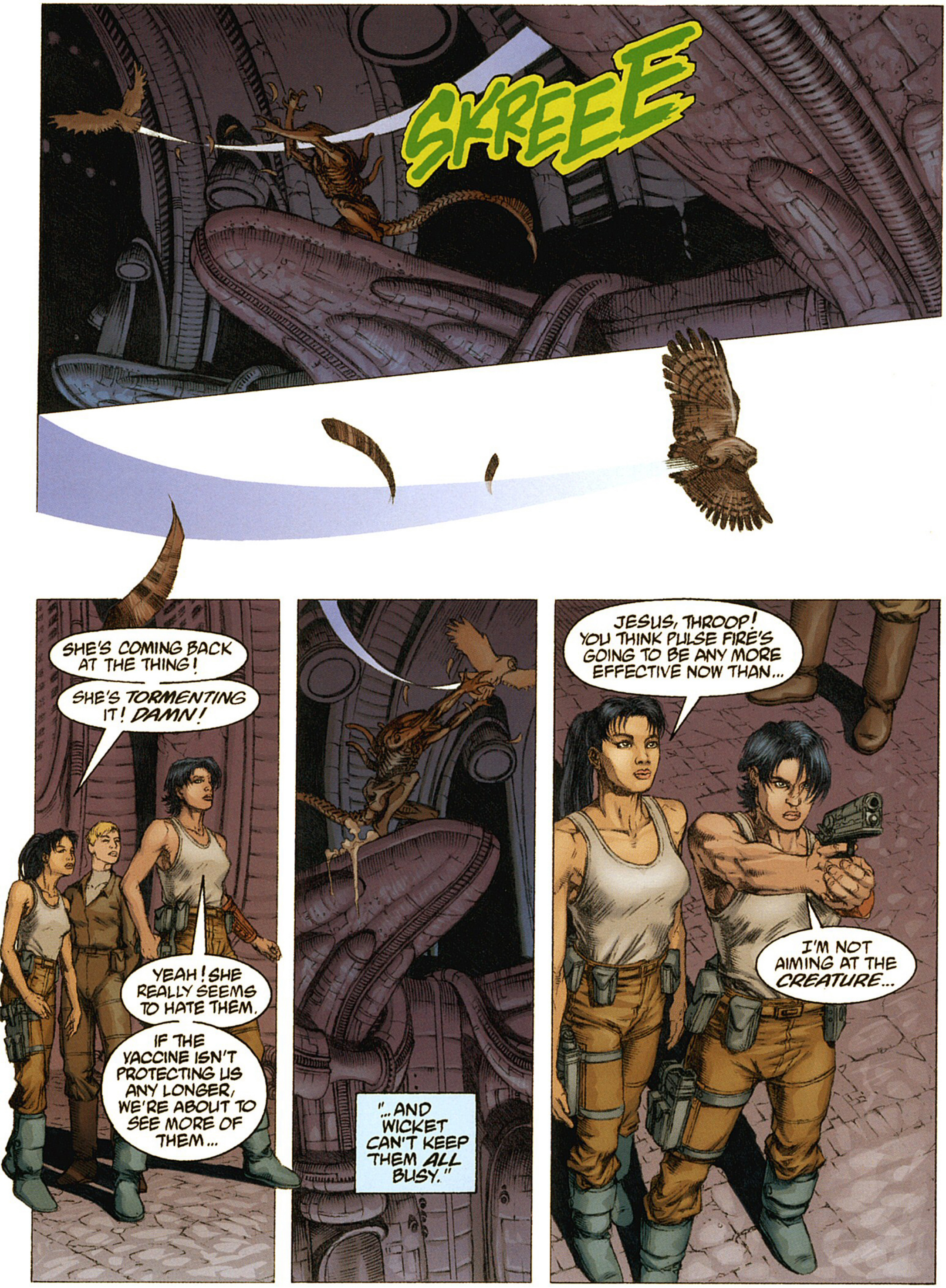
DAMN! DAMN! DAMN!
JESUS, ARCH! GET OFF YOUR ASS!
NO... LET HIM GO.
HE KNOWS THIS LABYRINTH, AND WE DON'T. HE'S GONE.
I'M SORRY... I WASN'T COMBAT-TRAINED...
NEVER MIND.
AT THIS POINT, I REALLY DON'T CARE IF WE CART BACK THE MURDERING BASTARD OR NOT...
...BECAUSE I'M WILLING TO BET THESE FILES CONTAIN HIS RESEARCH NOTES.
WHICH I'D ALSO BET IS WHAT THE GEHOLGOD IS MOST INTERESTED IN SEEING BACK ON EARTH, SAFE AND SOUND...
...THROOP TO THE RACHEL...COME IN, MASSEY...
THIS IS BAAL, THROOP.
MR. MASSEY IS PREOCCUPIED...
THEN LISTEN...
...PREPARE FOR TRANS-DOC FILE DOWNLOAD...
...IAGO 100016 TAURUS...

SET...
DESIGNATE FILE..."SPACE ANGEL"...
GET 'EM ALL.
I WANT EVERYTHING FED INTO THE RACHEL'S BANKS.
THAT'S IT.
OKAY, BAAL... TRANSFER COMPLETED.
WE'RE IN A RETREAT SCENARIO HERE...THROUGH HOSTILE TERRITORY. GET MASSEY TO THE BRIDGE AND OPEN A GEO-POSITIONING SIGNAL.
WE'VE GOT TO FIND OUR WAY OUT OF A MAZE...
MR. MASSEY AND I WILL BE STANDING BY, THROOP...
LET'S GET GOING...
WICKET... YOU'RE GOING TO BE OUR EYES...



HEY...DIDN'T STEN SAY WE'D NEED OUR THIRD VACCINE TREATMENT IN EIGHT HOURS?
YEAH. I'M AFRAID HE DID.
WELL, THAT TREAT-MENT MUST BE COMING DUE...
NOTHING WE CAN DO N--
OH, NO--
WICKET!

"THEY'VE COME FOR US. THE VACCINE'S WORN OFF AND THEY'VE COME FOR US..."


SKREEE
SHE'S COMING BACK AT THE THING!
SHE'S TORMENTING IT! DAMN!
YEAH! SHE REALLY SEEMS TO HATE THEM.
IF THE VACCINE ISN'T PROTECTING US ANY LONGER, WE'RE ABOUT TO SEE MORE OF THEM...
"...AND WICKET CAN'T KEEP THEM ALL BUSY."
JESUS, THROOP! YOU THINK PULSE FIRE'S GOING TO BE ANY MORE EFFECTIVE NOW THAN...
I'M NOT AIMING AT THE CREATURE...

POOM
K-K-KRAAACK
WICKET!
COME HERE, DAMMIT!

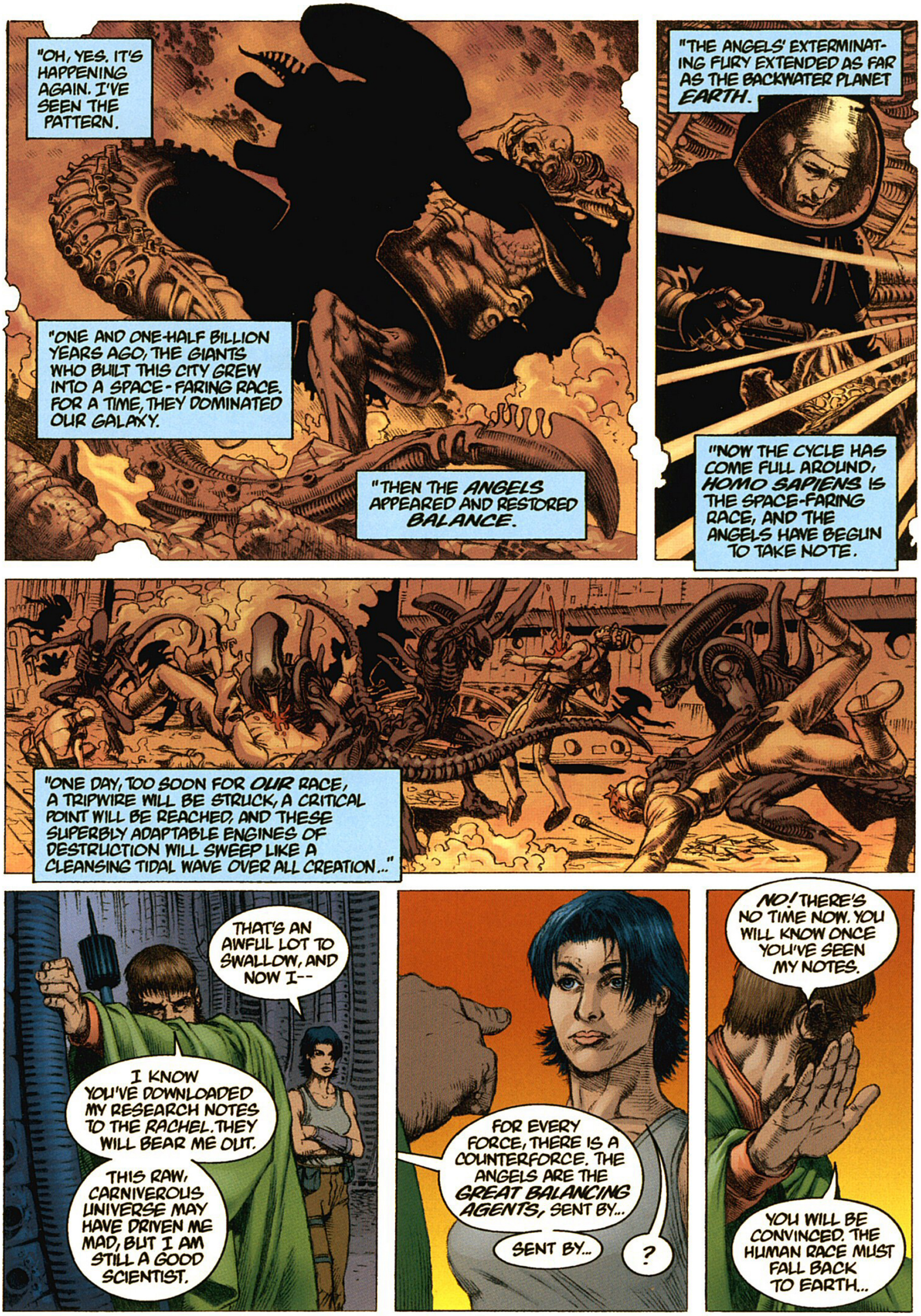
CRAZY @#*!@ BIRD.
LOOK AT THIS PLACE! IT'S A HONEYCOMB!
A BIG, ROTTED, CRUMBLING HONEY-COMB!
WITH LOTS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR AMBUSH, WHICH SEEMS TO BE THESE "ANGELS'" PREFERRED HUNTING STRATEGY.
I DON'T WANT TO BE A STANDING TARGET.
WE'RE STARTING TO PICK UP THE RACHEL'S SIGNAL STRONGER...
HEY! THERE'S THE BIRD!
I THINK SHE'S TELLING US THEY'RE NEAR.
JELLICOE! GET AWAY FROM THERE! THE FLOOR DOESN'T LOOK--
HUH...?

HELP ME!
HELP MEEEE!
JELLICOE! JELLICOE!
DAMMIT! DAMMIT! DAMMIT! DAMMIT!
DAM...
HSSSSS..
THROOP! LOOK--
--OUT!

COME ON, YOU @*#!!@ BASTARD!
POOM! POOM! POOM!
SKREEEEE...
OH, GOD...
ARCH, WE'VE GOT TO FIND JELLICOE...
ARCH?
AR--!!
WHUMP
GET BACK!
GET BACK, CHILDREN OF THE VOID!
SHE'S STILL MINE!
MINE!

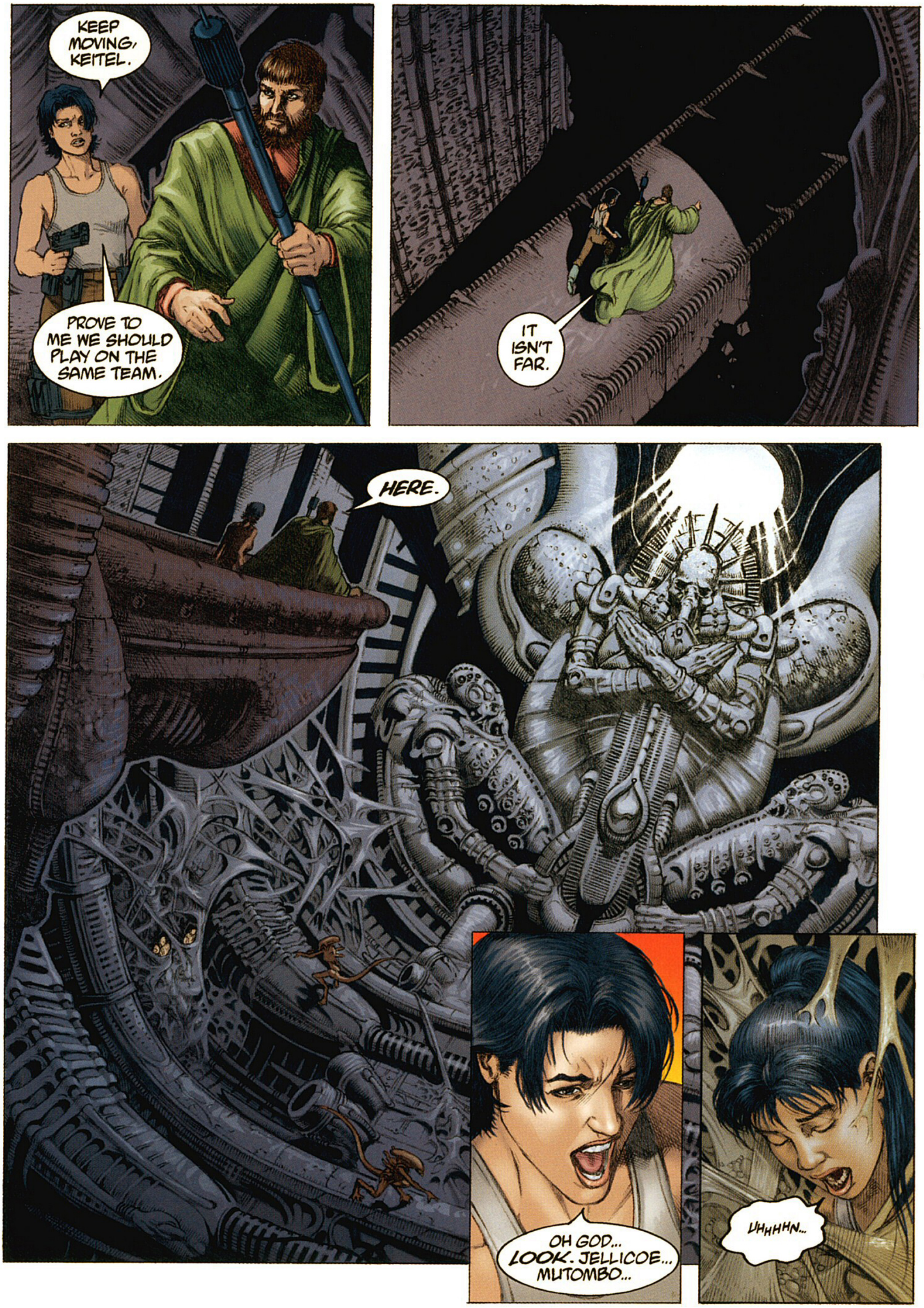
KEITEL! WHAT...?
MS. THROOP, DID THE RACHEL CARRY EGGS? THE EGGS OF LINGUAFOEDA ACHERONSIS?
YES...
THE GIANT... THE LIVING GIANT...
I JUST... :CHOKE: ...I SAW... AN EGG HAD BEEN PLACED WITH IT...AND THE EGG HAD ...HAD...
DOOMED... THIS IS ALL DOOMED.
SOME-ONE FROM THE RACHEL HAS INFECTED THE GIANT WITH... AN ANGEL LARVA...
?!
THE GREAT EXPERIMENT I NEVER DARED...
BUT WHO...?!
BY PROCESS OF ELIMINATION, IT WOULD HAVE TO BE BAAL. MASSEY COULD NOT HAVE MADE IT THROUGH THE CREATURES...
JESUS! ARCH!
...AND BAAL DID WARN US HE MIGHT BECOME CONTAMINATED BY DEIMOS' PROGRAMMING...

ONE OF OUR SYNTHS WAS APPARENTLY INFECTED WITH WEYLAND-YUTANI SUBVERSION PROGRAMMING...
WHAT'S THIS? TELL ME!
IN ALL PROBABILITY, THE COMPANY WAS ALSO RESPONSIBLE FOR SMUGGLING THE EGGS ON BOARD.
WEYLAND-YUTANI. OF COURSE.
SOMEHOW THEY LEARNED I'D COME OUT HERE, AND THEY FOUND A WAY TO BOTH SABOTAGE MY WORK AND CONDUCT ANOTHER OF THEIR SENSELESS, SELF-SERVING EXPERIMENTS ON LINGUAFOEDA.
THE STUNTED CRETINS.
IF ONLY YOU'D ARRIVED A BIT LATER.
IF ONLY I'D HAD TIME TO FINISH MY RESEARCH. WHAT I HAVE LEARNED IS SO VERY IMPORTANT...
BUT TIME HAS RUN OUT, AND NOW I WILL NEVER LEAVE THIS WORLD.
CLICK
BACK AT THE FIELD STATION--I WAS WRONG TO TURN ON YOU... WRONG TO ABANDON YOU. I PANICKED WHEN I SAW YOU DIDN'T UNDERSTAND.
THE TRUTH IS, YOU DO UNDERSTAND.
YOU ARE RIGHT TO DESPISE ME, TO LOATHE ME... I HAVE COMMITTED TERRIBLE ACTS...
...TERRIBLE, BUT NECESSARY ACTS...
... NECESSARY, YOU SEE, BECAUSE THE END IS COMING. THE GREAT COSMIC CYCLE OF EXTINCTION IS WHEELING AROUND AGAIN.
YOU MUST BE MY PROPHET, MS. THROOP. YOU MUST TAKE MY RESEARCH BACK TO EARTH AND CONVINCE THEM THAT THE ANGELS ARE RETURNED.


"OH, YES. IT'S HAPPENING AGAIN. I'VE SEEN THE PATTERN.
"ONE AND ONE-HALF BILLION YEARS AGO, THE GIANTS WHO BUILT THIS CITY GREW INTO A SPACE-FARING RACE. FOR A TIME, THEY DOMINATED OUR GALAXY.
"THEN THE ANGELS APPEARED AND RESTORED BALANCE.
"THE ANGELS' EXTERMINATING FURY EXTENDED AS FAR AS THE BACKWATER PLANET EARTH.
"NOW THE CYCLE HAS COME FULL AROUND, HOMO SAPIENS IS THE SPACE-FARING RACE, AND THE ANGELS HAVE BEGUN TO TAKE NOTE.
"ONE DAY, TOO SOON FOR OUR RACE, A TRIPWIRE WILL BE STRUCK, A CRITICAL POINT WILL BE REACHED, AND THESE SUPERBLY ADAPTABLE ENGINES OF DESTRUCTION WILL SWEEP LIKE A CLEANSING TIDAL WAVE OVER ALL CREATION..."
THAT'S AN AWFUL LOT TO SWALLOW, AND NOW I--
I KNOW YOU'VE DOWNLOADED MY RESEARCH NOTES TO THE RACHEL. THEY WILL BEAR ME OUT.
THIS RAW, CARNIVEROUS UNIVERSE MAY HAVE DRIVEN ME MAD, BUT I AM STILL A GOOD SCIENTIST.
FOR EVERY FORCE, THERE IS A COUNTERFORCE. THE ANGELS ARE THE GREAT BALANCING AGENTS, SENT BY...
SENT BY...
?
NO! THERE'S NO TIME NOW. YOU WILL KNOW ONCE YOU'VE SEEN MY NOTES.
YOU WILL BE CONVINCED. THE HUMAN RACE MUST FALL BACK TO EARTH...

...AND PREPARE THEIR SOULS FOR THE COMING APOCALYPSE.
OUR SPECIES' ONLY HOPE LIES IN UNION.
IF ONLY I'D HAD MORE TIME TO STUDY THEIR BEHAVIOR--THEIR ALIEN CONSCIOUSNESS...
...I MIGHT HAVE FOUND A SOLUTION...A REVELATION...A WAY FOR THE HUMAN RACE TO ENTER A STATE OF GRACE WITH THEM.
"YES, I LED MY TEAM TO CORPOREAL DEATH AT THE HANDS OF THE ANGELS. YES, I MANIPULATED THEM. I AM DAMNED FOR THAT.
"BUT, KNOWING WHAT I KNEW, I HAD NO CHOICE ... I NEEDED SUBJECTS...
"...I NEEDED TO OBSERVE THEIR LIFE CYCLE, THEIR NATURAL HISTORY...
"...IT IS SO DIFFICULT. THEY ARE CREATURES OF THE VOID, NOT QUITE MATERIAL, I THINK...
"...BUT THEY HAVE MADE MY MEN IMMORTAL."
KEITEL, I TRUST YOUR METAPHYSICS EVEN LESS THAN YOUR SCIENCE, BUT...
GOD! WHAT'S THAT AWFUL WAIL?
IT'S HAPPENED! THE LARVA HAS TAKEN TO THAT ANCIENT BODY...
...A NEW ALIEN IS BORN!
WAROOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO

YOU MUST GO! NOW!
THE DESTROYER OF DESTROYERS IS LOOSE!
TAKE MY NOTES BACK TO EARTH AND WARN THE PEOPLE!
OKAY, KEITEL...WE'LL MAKE A DEAL.
I'LL GET YOUR FINDINGS TO EARTH IF YOU TAKE ME TO JELLICOE AND MUTOMBO!
AND DON'T LIE TO ME...I KNOW THESE THINGS BUILD NESTS...
IMPOSSIBLE! THERE'S A LIMIT TO HOW MUCH THE ANGELS WILL ACCEPT!
EVEN WITH THE PROTECTION OF THE RHODES VACCINE, I COULDN'T RISK ENTERING THEIR NEST...
THAT'S THE DEAL, DR. KEITEL! IF YOU WANT YOUR FINDINGS TO REACH EARTH...
VERY WELL, YOU FOOL!
BUT SEND YOUR SYNTHETIC BACK TO THE RACHEL...
...IF YOU DON'T MAKE IT BACK FROM THE NEST, SHE MAY SURVIVE TO DELIVER MY FINDINGS...
THAT MAKES SENSE. ARCH... GET TO THE SHIP...
BUT--
GO. AND BE CAREFUL--WE DON'T KNOW WHAT BAAL...OR MASSEY ...IS UP TO.
I DON'T SHOW UP IN TWO HOURS, YOU TAKE HER HOME.


KEEP MOVING, KEITEL.
PROVE TO ME WE SHOULD PLAY ON THE SAME TEAM.
IT ISN'T FAR.
HERE.
OH GOD... LOOK. JELLICOE... MUTOMBO...
UHHHHN...

WE'VE GOT TO GET DOWN THERE, KEITEL...
CHRIST! LOOK WHAT THEY'VE DONE TO THEM...
MS. THROOP-- WE CAN'T GET ANY CLOSER!
AND I CAN'T KEEP THEM FROM YOU MUCH LONGER! BE SENSIBLE!
LOOK ABOVE...
THEY'VE BEEN WITH US EVERY STEP... WATCHING... WAITING...
THEY ARE VERY EDGY, AND--
SHOOM!
WH...WHAT'S THAT?
THE WHOLE PLACE IS SHAKING!
SHOOM!
IT...IT'S ALIVE...
IT'S COME...
SHOOM!

THE LAST SURVIVING GIANT COULD NOT ESCAPE THE ANGELS...
KA-THOOOM
HSSSSSSSSSSS...

SKREEEEEEE!

HRUUUK-K-K...
BAAL-- YOU POOR SON OF A BITCH...
WE CAN FREE THEM, KEITEL!
HELP ME FREE THEM!
GUUNCH...
IT'S OKAY, JELLICOE...
...WE'LL BE OKAY...
IT'S TOO LATE FOR THIS ONE...I'M SORRY!
NOW GO! THIS WHOLE ANCIENT CITY IS ABOUT TO CAVE IN!
IT'S ROTTED AND FAR TOO FRAGILE...

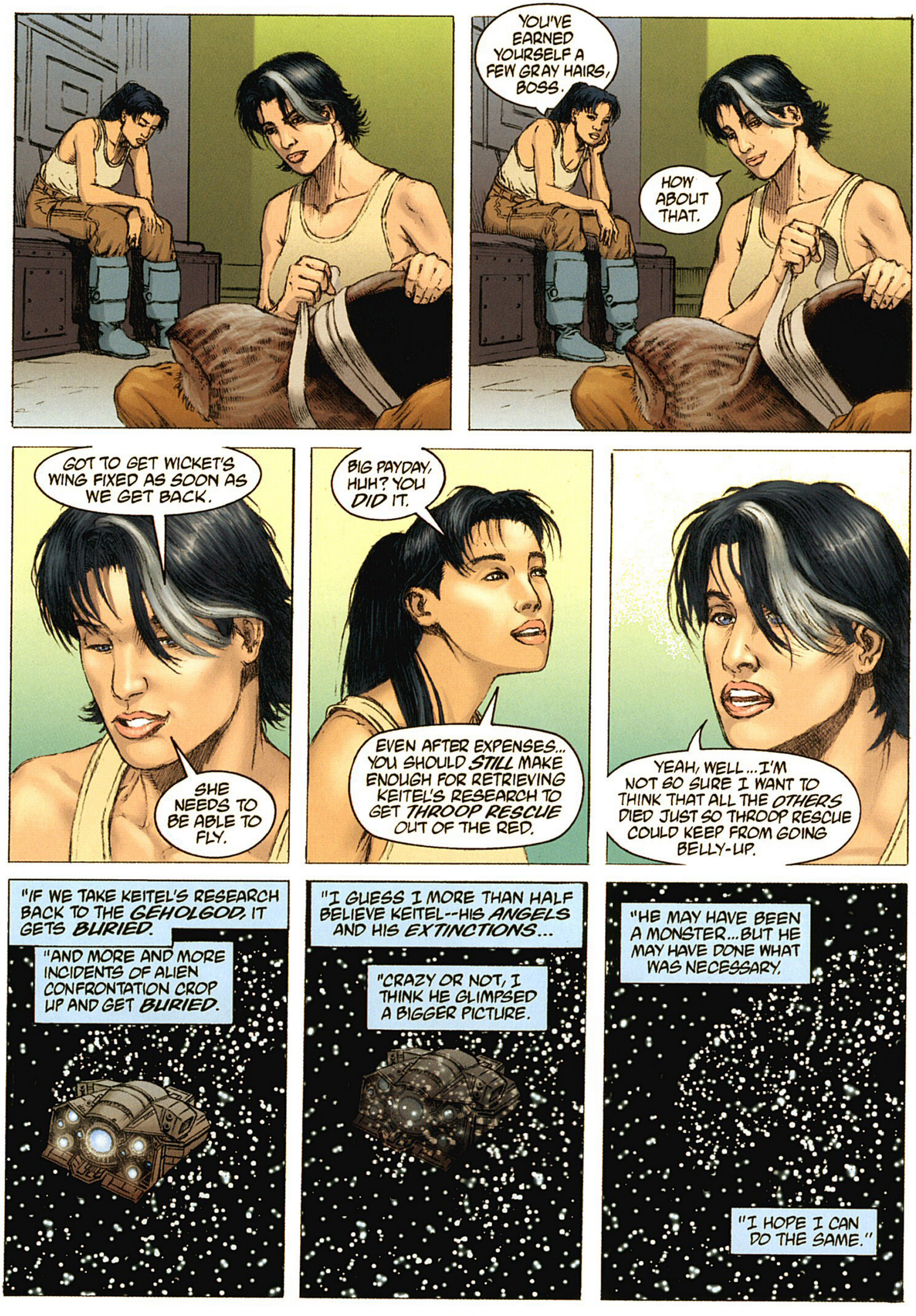
KEITEL! FOR GOD'S SAKE, COME WITH US!
THERE'S NO REASON...
KEEP TO THE RISING CORRIDORS, MS. THROOP. ALWAYS BEAR LEFT AT A BREAK.
I BELONG HERE WITH MY MEN... THE SOULS OF MY MEN. I'LL SHARE THEIR FATE.
I'VE DONE THINGS THAT ARE UNFORGIVABLE, BUT PLEASE BELIEVE ME...
THEY WERE NECESSARY.
GO! BE MY PROPHET!
DO NOT TRUST THE GEHOLGOD! TELL THE PEOPLE! TELL THEM!

THROOP TO RACHEL!
COME IN, RACHEL!
NUTS! CAN'T HEAR A DAMN THING!
ALMOST THERE, JELLICOE...
WE'RE ALMOST...
THERE SHE IS!
THROOP TO RACHEL...IF ANYONE CAN HEAR ME...
...OPEN THE DAMN BAY!

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU...
THROOP ...THIS IS ARCH...
WE'RE STANDING BY FOR IMMEDIATE LIFT-OFF...
...ARE YOU ABOARD?
THROOP? PLEASE ACKNOWLEDGE...
...ARE YOU ABOARD?

HSSSSSS...
THROOP...?
HSSSSSSSSSS
SSSSCHUK
SSKREEE!!!
ARCH...GET
US THE HELL OUT
OF HERE!

PRUUMMBBLL
I FOUND MASSEY WITH HIS CHEST CAVITY RUPTURED OUT. I FOUND STEN'S BODY IN THE HOLD.
I RESECURED THE REMAINING EGG IN ITS CONTAINER. I FAILED TO DISCOVER THE CREATURE ON BOARD.
FROM OUT OF *MASSEY*...?
YEAH. YOU DIDN'T FIND IT BECAUSE IT DIDN'T WANT YOU TO. THEY'RE ONLY INTERESTED IN BIOLOGICAL HOSTS.
AND I DOUBT WE'LL EVER KNOW JUST WHAT WENT WRONG WHILE WE WERE GONE.
CAN YOU GET US HOME, ARCH?
MASSEY REVERSE-LOADED ALL THE JUMP COORDINATES. HE WAS A GOOD PILOT.
I CAN GET US HOME.


YOU'VE EARNED YOURSELF A FEW GRAY HAIRS, BOSS.
HOW ABOUT THAT.
GOT TO GET WICKET'S WING FIXED AS SOON AS WE GET BACK.
SHE NEEDS TO BE ABLE TO FLY.
BIG PAYDAY, HUH? YOU DID IT.
EVEN AFTER EXPENSES... YOU SHOULD STILL MAKE ENOUGH FOR RETRIEVING KEITEL'S RESEARCH TO GET THROOP RESCUE OUT OF THE RED.
YEAH, WELL... I'M NOT SO SURE I WANT TO THINK THAT ALL THE OTHERS DIED JUST SO THROOP RESCUE COULD KEEP FROM GOING BELLY-UP.
"IF WE TAKE KEITEL'S RESEARCH BACK TO THE GEHOLGOD, IT GETS BURIED.
"AND MORE AND MORE INCIDENTS OF ALIEN CONFRONTATION CROP UP AND GET BURIED.
"I GUESS I MORE THAN HALF BELIEVE KEITEL--HIS ANGELS AND HIS EXTINCTIONS...
"CRAZY OR NOT, I THINK HE GLIMPSED A BIGGER PICTURE.
"HE MAY HAVE BEEN A MONSTER... BUT HE MAY HAVE DONE WHAT WAS NECESSARY.
"I HOPE I CAN DO THE SAME."

APOCALYPSE

script
MARK SCHULTZ

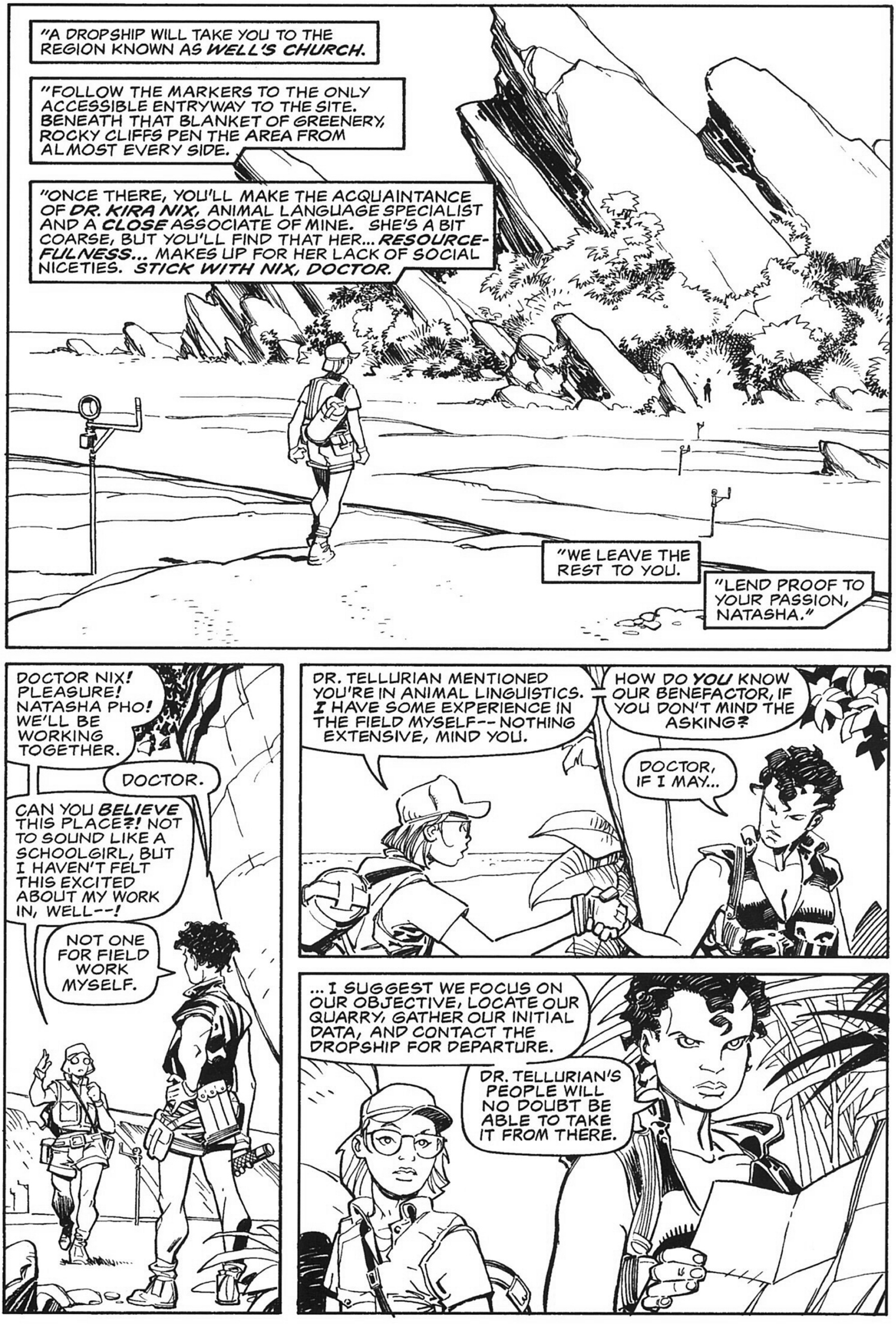
art
DOUG WHEATLEY

colors
CHRIS CHUCKRY

lettering
CLEM ROBINS

title illustration
MARK SCHULTZ with **KEITH WOOD**

WHY ME?
THE GEHOLGOD INSTITUTE HAS BEEN FOLLOWING YOUR RESEARCH FOR WEYLAND-YUTANI FOR SOME TIME. YOU'VE MADE GREAT STRIDES, DR. PHO. YOURS IS TRULY A VOCATION.
I'M NOT FOLLOWING.
I DON'T FAULT YOU, NATASHA. YOU PLAY THE GAME WELL!
YOU'VE BEEN RECOMMENDED FOR THE TIRGU-MIRES PROJECT. LINGUAFOEDA ACHERONSIS...
...THE ALIENS, MY DEAR.
WE ARE IN THE POSSESSION OF A REMARKABLE FIND. A RICH, VITAL ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH THE CREATURES THRIVE... BUT ONE NEVER EXPOSED TO HUMANS.
UNTIL NOW.
YOU MEAN--?!
YES. A MEANS TO TEST YOUR THEORIES ON THEIR MORPHOLOGY. I'VE READ YOUR PAPERS.
IT'S WHAT YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR.
BUT TIRGU-MIRES IS A BARREN PLANET. A LIFELESS CHUNK OF VOLCANIC ROCK.


"A DROPSHIP WILL TAKE YOU TO THE REGION KNOWN AS WELL'S CHURCH.
"FOLLOW THE MARKERS TO THE ONLY ACCESSIBLE ENTRYWAY TO THE SITE. BENEATH THAT BLANKET OF GREENERY, ROCKY CLIFFS PEN THE AREA FROM ALMOST EVERY SIDE.
"ONCE THERE, YOU'LL MAKE THE ACQUAINTANCE OF DR. KIRA NIX, ANIMAL LANGUAGE SPECIALIST AND A CLOSE ASSOCIATE OF MINE. SHE'S A BIT COARSE, BUT YOU'LL FIND THAT HER... RESOURCEFULNESS... MAKES UP FOR HER LACK OF SOCIAL NICETIES. STICK WITH NIX, DOCTOR.
"WE LEAVE THE REST TO YOU.
"LEND PROOF TO YOUR PASSION, NATASHA."
DOCTOR NIX! PLEASURE! NATASHA PHO! WE'LL BE WORKING TOGETHER.
DOCTOR.
CAN YOU BELIEVE THIS PLACE?! NOT TO SOUND LIKE A SCHOOLGIRL, BUT I HAVEN'T FELT THIS EXCITED ABOUT MY WORK IN, WELL--!
NOT ONE FOR FIELD WORK MYSELF.
DR. TELLURIAN MENTIONED YOU'RE IN ANIMAL LINGUISTICS. I HAVE SOME EXPERIENCE IN THE FIELD MYSELF-- NOTHING EXTENSIVE, MIND YOU.
HOW DO YOU KNOW OUR BENEFACTOR, IF YOU DON'T MIND THE ASKING?
DOCTOR, IF I MAY...
...I SUGGEST WE FOCUS ON OUR OBJECTIVE, LOCATE OUR QUARRY, GATHER OUR INITIAL DATA, AND CONTACT THE DROPSHIP FOR DEPARTURE.
DR. TELLURIAN'S PEOPLE WILL NO DOUBT BE ABLE TO TAKE IT FROM THERE.

SHALL WE?
...WHERE I SPENT MONTHS RESEARCHING THE INTERTIDAL LIFE FORMS ALONE--!
DON'T MOVE. I'VE GOT SOMETHING.
IT MUST BE THE--!
QUIET.
CLICK CLICK
WUH WUH WUH WUH
IT'S NOT THE LOCAL AVIAN LIFE.
IT'S LINGUAFOEDA ...COMMUNICATING!
PARROTING ONE OF THE BIRD SONGS, MAYBE THE PITCH IS DEEPER.
EVEN SO, THERE'S NO DOCU-MENTED--
HOLD ON. THERE'S SOME-THING ELSE...
CLICK
WUH WUH
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
OH!

WELL, YOU HIT YOUR TARGET--
Oh.
LOOK AT THIS... IF YOU KNOW WHAT I KNOW ABOUT LINGUAFOEDA...
ITS BLOOD HASN'T CORRODED ANY OF THE PLANT LIFE!
DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS!?
THEY CAN ADAPT! BIO-IMPERATIVES MEANT FOR PROTECTION OR ENSURING SURVIVAL --LIKE ACID BLOOD-- AREN'T GENETIC CONSTANTS!
THERE'S NO BASIS FOR YOUR--
HA! THE MOON JELLIES OF TWENTIETH CENTURY PALAU ADAPTED TO ENCLOSED, NITROGEN-RICH LAKES. THEIR DEFENSE MECHANISM, STINGING TENTACLES, WITHERED AWAY. THEY LIVED OFF INTERNAL ALGAE.
OR THINK OF THE BLACK FLIES OF MONO LAKE...
...OR THE SNOW BEETLES ON FAR IO.
NATURE'S NOT ONLY A GREAT PROVIDER, IT'S FRUGAL!
IF I'M RIGHT, THIS GOES BEYOND ADAPTATION. THE ALIENS SECLUDED HERE MAY BE REPRESENTATIVE OF AN ARCHETYPAL STATE! WE'LL NEED TO LOCATE A HIVE.
PUT ON YOUR DETECTIVE CAP! WE'RE ABOUT TO SOLVE THE MYSTERY OF A LIFETIME!
TWO MYSTERIES ACTUALLY. THE OTHER IS WHY A SCIENTIST WOULD CARRY A MILITARY FIREARM.
STAY SHARP, PHO.

WHOOAA--!
I'M FINE! JUST SLIPPED!
THE TRAIL IS--
AHHHHHHH!
ARRGH!
OOF!
oh.
FOUND IT.

STAY CALM, PHO. YOU'RE A SCIENTIST.
THIS IS WHAT YOU SIGNED ON FOR...
WHAT'RE YOU GIVING OFF?
TEEP TEEP TEEP TEEP
ANTS COMMUNICATE VIA AIRBORNE PHEROMONES. COULD ALIENS DO THE SAME TO WARN OF PREDATORS?
I DON'T SEEM TO SPOOK THEM. WONDER WHAT'S FREAKING THEM--
WIR WIR WIR WIR
HOLY MERCY...!

NOTGOOD-
NOTGOOD-
NOT--
BLAM!
HUFF
HUFF
OOF--
YOU!
YOU SET ME UP FROM THE START! YOU NEEDED SOMEONE EXPERT ENOUGH TO BOLSTER GELHOLGOD'S THEORIES...
...AND NAIVE ENOUGH TO BE A CLAY PIGEON...
DAMN, I SHOULD HAVE SEEN THROUGH YOUR GAME! THAT PULSE PISTOL... YOUR FAMILIARITY WITH THE TERRAIN! THIS ISN'T THE FIRST EXPEDITION!
YOU'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE!
YOU FIGURED IT OUT.
BLAM! BLAM!

TELLURIAN VALUES WHAT YOU HAVE TO OFFER, EVEN IF THE OTHERS DO NOT.
Ugh!
NO!
BLAMM!
YOU WERE HALF RIGHT. I'VE BEEN HERE, BUT THIS WAS THE FIRST... HUMAN EXPEDITION. NO HUMAN'S KNOWN THESE CREATURES BEFORE YOU.
ZZZT
YOU SHOULD--
WE'RE LEAVING. OTHERS ARE COMING.
AND I HAVE ANOTHER PASSENGER TO COLLECT.

YOU BASTARD!
I FOUND THIS SEWN INTO MY PACK! MONITORING ME THE WHOLE WAY? WHY THE SUBTERFUGE, TELLURIAN?!
WHAT EXPERIMENTS ARE YOU CONDUCTING OUT THERE?! WHAT WERE YOU HOPING TO LEARN?!
WHAT ARE YOU HIDING?!
SHADOWS IN DARKNESS... YOU AND YOUR GROUP ARE NO BETTER THAN THE COMPANY!
YOU CAN COME OUT OF HIDING, PRATYEKA. SHE KNEW YOU WERE HERE. AS I SAID, SHE'S INFINITELY PERCEPTIVE.
IRRELEVANT. YOU SHOULD NOT HAVE MUDDIED THE PLAN WITH...IMPULSES.
WE'VE ACHIEVED OUR GOAL. SHE HAS CONFIRMED OUR SUSPICIONS. WE CAN NOW PROCEED WITH THE MANDALA DIRECTIVE.
SHE IS A FACTOR WE HAVE NOT CALCULATED.
PHO WILL BE OF SERVICE TO US... MUCH AS ALECTO THROOP.*
*SEE ALIENS: APOCALYPSE

AFTER THAT, WELL...
I WAS RIGHT. IT'S THE ONLY REASON THEY'VE LEFT ME ALIVE WITH THEIR SECRETS. THERE'S MORE TO LEARN, AND THEY NEED ME. BUT THIS GOES BEYOND ANY ABSTRACTS THEY COULD POSE. ALIENS ARE BLANK SLATES...
IS THEIR AGGRESSIVE NATURE COBBLED FROM MAN'S? IF SO, THEY'RE PROJECTING THAT WRATH BACK TEN-FOLD.
THEY'RE MORE THAN ADAPTIVE. THEY MAY BE ABLE TO REWRITE THEIR "PROGRAMMING" ...LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE...
"WELL'S CHURCH IS JUST A MYTH, NOW. GEHOLGOD WANTS ANSWERS, ONLY TO DISPOSE OF THEM.
"THESE CREATURES ARE OLDER THAN THE STARS.
"THEIR EXECUTIONERS ARE SLOPPY.
"THEY'RE PERCEPTIVE.
"ADAPTABLE...
"EXCELLENT PUPILS..."
WUHWUHWUH
"...WHEN THEY HAVE THE RIGHT TEACHER."
WUHWUH WUHWUH WUHWUH
END

ONCE IN A LIFETIME

script
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lettering
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title illustration
RICK LEONARDI and **BOB WIACEK** with **JASON HVAM**

IT USED TO BE THERE WAS NOTHING HUMANS FEARED MORE THAN THESE ALIEN BEASTS. NOW IT'S THE OTHER WAY AROUND.
OR IT WOULD BE, IF THE POOR DEVILS WERE PROGRAMMED TO FEAR ANYTHING!
MAN, LOOK AT THIS STUFF WORK! TAKE THAT, YOU FREAK OF NATURE!
DIE HIDEOUSLY!
INTRODUCING A LITTLE CONCOCTION THOSE BOYS IN RESEARCH AND SADISM ARE CALLING THE JUICE. ESSENTIALLY, BUG SPRAY.
COMPLETELY TOXIC TO THE CREATURES. SOMEHOW TURNS THEIR METABOLISMS AGAINST THEM, SO THEY'RE ESSENTIALLY BEING EATEN ALIVE BY THEIR OWN SYSTEMS.
THE FUMES ALONE WILL DO THE JOB. DIRECT CONTACT IS UNNECESSARY.
BUT IT DOES PRODUCE A RATHER SPECTACULAR SHOW.
IF YOU'RE INTO THAT SORT OF THING.

DISPENSING THIS MODERN MIRACLE OF LABORATORY INSANITY IS A LITTLE TEAM KNOWN AS...
STRIKEFORCE
IS IT ME, OR DO THESE CREATURES BEAR A CERTAIN RESEMBLANCE TO A YOUNG JOHN QUINCY ADAMS?
THE TEAM LEADER IS LEX BRODIE: FOUNDER OF THE PROGRAM, TOUGH AS NAILS. SHE'S THE BEST...
...EXCEPT IN THE MIND OF COLE MARVIN, WHO THINKS OF HIMSELF AS JUST A LITTLE BETTER... AND HE MAY BE RIGHT. HE CALLS HIMSELF "THE HAMMER," HOPING PEOPLE WILL FORGET HIS REAL NAME IS MARVIN.
NIKOLAI PORTNOV IS FORMER MOB MUSCLE. MADE THE TEAM IN KIND OF A WORK-RELEASE PAROLE PROGRAM. BETTER TO PUT ALL THAT DESTRUCTIVE FORCE TO SOME POSITIVE USE.
SHAW, IF YOU DO NOT SHUT OFF THAT SWILL, I AM GOING TO RIP YOUR SOUND SYSTEM OUT AND TAKE YOUR SPINE WITH IT.
HEY, CHILL, PAUL BUNYAN...
...I'M AN ARTIST, MAN, AND AN ARTIST NEEDS TO SET THE MOOD.
OKAY, BOYS, THAT'S ENOUGH...
BUT--

THEIR MISSION:
RECLAIM SALAZAR VII, THE ONCE-THRIVING COLONY WORLD NOW OVERRUN WITH TENANTS OF A LESS DESIRABLE STRIPE. IT'S NOT A COMPLICATED PROPOSITION: THREE HIVES, SPORADIC INFESTATIONS PLANETWIDE. SIMPLE ENOUGH. OR IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN.
THE LUNATIC OF THE TEAM IS XERXES. CLAIMS TO HAIL FROM PREHISTORIC TIMES. WHATEVER THE REAL STORY, HE'S PUT A HELL OF A LOT OF WEAR AND TEAR ON THAT CARCASS OF HIS.
WHAT IS THAT NOISE?!
THAT NOISE IS CUTTING-EDGE MUSIC. BUT I WOULDN'T EXPECT YOU TO KNOW ABOUT THAT.
THE TEAM'S PROBLEM CHILD IS DIGGER SHAW. YES, HE'S THE SON OF THE "SUIT" BEHIND THIS WHOLE STRIKEFORCE ENTERPRISE. IF IT MAKES YOU FEEL ANY BETTER, THE COMPANY'S RISKING ITS OWN OFFSPRING IN THIS OPERATION.
I SAID, SHUT UP!
OR I'LL KICK BOTH YOUR SORRY CANS TO KRAKATAU!
THAT'S BETTER. AND SHAW, KILL THE MUSIC, BEFORE I KILL YOU!
KILLING, MA'AM.
LIKE I SAID, SHE'S THE BEST.

NO WORRIES, MA'AM. XERXES AND PORTNOV ARE RIGHT WITH ME.
AND IT'S A HIVE, ALL RIGHT. DEFINITELY A HIVE.
EASY, HAMMER. HOW'S YOUR POSITION? CAN YOU JUICE IT?
BRODIE, I'VE FOUND AN OPENING OVER HERE. IT MAY BE SOMETHING.
YES, MA'AM. XERXES, PORTNOV, YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO.
ROGER, WILCOX.
CAN THE WISE-GUY STUFF, XERXES.
NICE GOING, HAMMER. MAKE SURE YOU'VE GOT ADEQUATE BACKUP BEFORE PROCEEDING.
SIR, THEY'VE BEEN TRYING TO CAN MY UNIQUE COMIC GENIUS FOR CENTURIES. THERE WAS ONCE EVEN AN AEROSOL PRODUCT.
YOUR HEAD'S GOING TO BE AN AEROSOL PRODUCT!
YES, MA'AM. WE KNOW.
BOYS, BOYS, FOCUS! THAT CHEMICAL DRIVES THOSE THINGS INSANE BEFORE THEY EXPIRE. LET THEM GET TOO CLOSE AND YOU'LL BE THEIR LUNCH!

MAN, I CANNOT BELIEVE WE GET PAID TO DO THIS!
PORTNOY, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
SPBLAM!
MY JOB.
IS THAT REALLY NECESSARY?
GO TO HELL.
flick
SOMEHOW, SOMETHING SET OFF A SPARK.
EAAAUGH
BADA-THOOM
NOT THAT IT SHOULD HAVE MATTERED, BUT THE LAB BOYS MISSED SOMETHING-- THE SALAZARAN ATMOSPHERE WAS CHANGING, ITS OXYGEN CONTENT WENT SOARING.
AND THE JUICE WAS REACTING TO THAT CHANGE... BECOMING HIGHLY VOLATILE.
SO ALL IT TOOK WAS THAT ONE SPARK.

WHAT THE BLOODY HELL?!
HOLY %$#@!!
FOOOM!
WHAT DID THOSE MORONS DO?! THE STUPID #&@%ERS BLEW THEMSELVES TO BITS!
QUIET, SHAW, YOU'RE IN BAD SHAPE! LET'S TRY TO GET YOU BACK TO THE SHIP!
IT LOOKS DAMAGED, BUT MAYBE WE CAN USE IT AS A BASE!
LET'S GET THE %@#$ OUT OF HERE!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! WE'RE NOT LEAVING THE OTHERS BEHIND!
DON'T YOU GET IT?! THERE ARE NO OTHERS!
"DAMMIT, SHAW, I'M ORDERING YOU--"
"NOT THIS TIME, LADY. I'M CALLING THE SHOTS NOW."

OH MY GOD, OH MY GOD!
THE SHIP'S BEEN BREACHED!
"THE CONTROLS! FOR GOD'S SAKE, SHAW, FLY THIS THING!"
CHOOOM!
"AND THAT'S HOW IT ENDED.
"ANYONE WHO MIGHT HAVE SURVIVED WAS EASY PICKINGS FOR THE CREATURES."

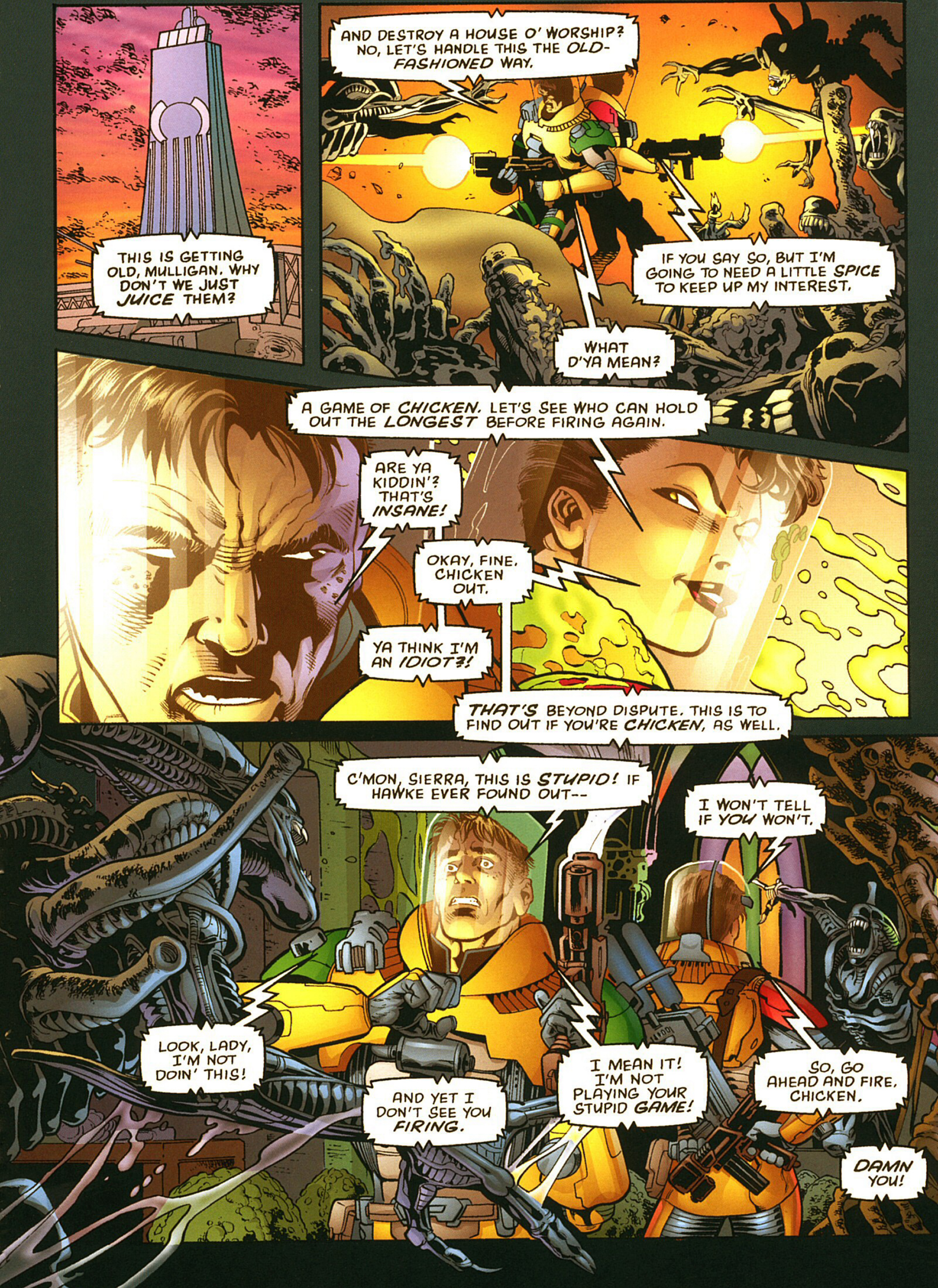
WHICH BRINGS US TO THE PRESENT. A SECOND TEAM. A SECOND ATTEMPT TO RECLAIM SALAZAR VII. THIS TIME, I TRUST, WITH A DIFFERENT RESULT.
MY NAME IS BISHOP HAWKE... RECENTLY REASSIGNED FROM THE COLONIAL MARINES. THE COMPANY HAS HIRED ME TO PICK UP THE PROJECT WHERE BRODIE LEFT OFF. YOU'RE THE TEAM THEY ASSIGNED ME.
FOR THE NEXT TWO WEEKS, WE'RE GOING TO TRAIN WITH THE UPDATED STRIKE-FORCE TECHNOLOGY, AND FIND OUT HOW WE WORK AS A TEAM. THEN, IF ALL GOES WELL, WE MOVE PLANETSIDE TO SEE HOW MUCH YOU'VE LEARNED.
BUT FIRST, SINCE YOU'VE ALL BEEN TRAINING SEPARATELY THUS FAR, A FEW INTRODUCTIONS ARE IN ORDER...
"... SIERRA CRUZ, PAROLED TO THE PROGRAM AFTER A SQUANDERED YOUTH OF TERRORISM AND STREET-GANG VIOLENCE.
"ROBBIE MULLIGAN, WHO RECENTLY PARTED COMPANY WITH THE MERCHANT MARINES... NOT ON THE BEST OF TERMS. SOMETHING TO DO WITH AN ADMIRAL'S DAUGHTER...
"... AND EDEN ALEXANDER. FORMER SMUGGLER, TRYING TO EARN AN HONEST LIVING FOR A CHANGE."
SO, WE GONNA DO THIS ALL DAY? I NEED TO GO TO THE BATHROOM.
"SORRY, EDEN...

"...THERE'LL BE NO BATHROOM BREAKS ON SALAZAR VII...
"...AND WE SHOULD BE TOUCHING DOWN IN THIRTY SECONDS.
"OKAY, EVERYBODY, LET'S USE OUR HEADS OUT THERE. WE'VE TRAINED HARD AND YOU'VE LOOKED GOOD, BUT THIS IS THE REAL THING.
"LET'S CONSIDER TODAY A SHAKEDOWN RUN. SEE HOW THE EQUIPMENT WORKS, GET A SENSE OF HOW WE REACT IN A COMBAT SITUATION.
"SIERRA, YOU AND MULLIGAN WILL BE A TEAM. I'LL STICK WITH EDEN AND TRY TO KEEP HER OUT OF TROUBLE."
"WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?"
THANKYA, SIR! I'VE BEEN HOPIN' FOR THE CHANCE TA SEE THIS ONE IN ACTION.
MULLIGAN
BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR.
SO IT'S JUST THE FOUR OF US? DIDN'T YOU PROMISE US A FIFTH BODY FOR THE MISSION?
I'M AFRAID OUR FIFTH TEAMMATE IS DELAYED IN TRANSIT.
"AND IT WOULD KILL US TO WAIT FOR HIM?"
"THERE'S A MAJOR STORM APPROACHING THE MISSION SITE, AND IT WOULD SHUT US DOWN FOR DAYS. THE COMPANY DOESN'T WANT TO WAIT THAT LONG BEFORE GIVING THE UPDATED EQUIPMENT A TEST RUN.
"WHICH MEANS IT'S TIME TO POWER UP, FOLKS..."

SO, SIERRA...
...WHAT D'YA THINK O' THE NEW BOSS?
SHH! LOOK AT THAT, MULLIGAN!
WHAT?
THAT!
MOTHER OF GOD!
P-CHOW!
LOOKS LIKE WE GOT US A LITTLE NEST HERE.
GOD FLIPPIN' ALMIGHTY! THIS IS A CHURCH! THESE MONSTERS ARE DESECRATIN' A CHURCH!
LIKE THEY KNOW THE DIFFERENCE. IT'S JUST A CONVENIENT STRUCTURE AS FAR AS THEY'RE CONCERNED.
YEAH, WELL, I'LL SHOW 'EM CONVENIENCE!

COME IN, SIERRA. SIERRA? WHAT'S YOUR STATUS? OVER.
WHAT'S THE MATTER, HAWKE? THEY AIN'T RESPONDIN'? YOU THINK MAYBE THEY'RE--
I DON'T KNOW, EDEN. THE RECEPTION'S IN AND OUT. MY GUESS IS THE MAGNETIC FIELD OF THIS PLANET MIGHT BE--
YOW! THE FLOOR!
HANG ON!
WUNK!
OW!
MAN! I THINK I BUSTED MY--
UH-OH.
WHAT IS IT, EDEN? WHAT'S WRONG?!

NO! NO! NO! NO! NO! NO! NO!
SPLUTH!
plooth!
H-HOW--?
K-CHOW!!
ABOVE YOU, EDEN! HEADS UP, I'M COMING DOWN!
PERHAPS YOU COULD PICK UP YOUR GUN AND JOIN ME.
Uh, RIGHT.
WHAT IS THIS, SOME KINDA BUG CONVENTION? SHOULDN'T THEY ALL BE IN SOME KINDA HIVE, OR SOMETHIN'?
THEY ARE. THE HIVE IS PROBABLY UNDERNEATH THIS COMPLEX AND THEY MUST BE EXPANDING IT INTO THE HUMAN STRUCTURES ABOVE. WHICH MEANS...
WE COULD BE SITTIN' ON MILLIONS OF THESE CRITTERS!


THIS IS GETTING OLD, MULLIGAN. WHY DON'T WE JUST JUICE THEM?
AND DESTROY A HOUSE O' WORSHIP? NO, LET'S HANDLE THIS THE OLD-FASHIONED WAY.
IF YOU SAY SO, BUT I'M GOING TO NEED A LITTLE SPICE TO KEEP UP MY INTEREST.
WHAT D'YA MEAN?
A GAME OF CHICKEN. LET'S SEE WHO CAN HOLD OUT THE LONGEST BEFORE FIRING AGAIN.
ARE YA KIDDIN'? THAT'S INSANE!
OKAY, FINE. CHICKEN OUT.
YA THINK I'M AN IDIOT?!
THAT'S BEYOND DISPUTE. THIS IS TO FIND OUT IF YOU'RE CHICKEN, AS WELL.
C'MON, SIERRA, THIS IS STUPID! IF HAWKE EVER FOUND OUT--
I WON'T TELL IF YOU WON'T.
LOOK, LADY, I'M NOT DOIN' THIS!
AND YET I DON'T SEE YOU FIRING.
I MEAN IT! I'M NOT PLAYING YOUR STUPID GAME!
SO, GO AHEAD AND FIRE, CHICKEN.
DAMN YOU!

K-CHOW! K-CHOW! K-CHOW!
Hee! I WIN!
...OKAY...
...OKAY, YA BLOODY LUNATIC. WHAT DID YA PROVE?
NOTHING. YET.
WHAT THE HELL ARE YA DOIN' ?!?
WATCH AND LEARN, ROOKIE.
SWEET MOTHER OF MERCY. THIS IS SUICIDE, LADY!

SIERRA! MY GOD, WHAT ARE YA TRYIN' TA PROVE?!
HE'S-- HE'S COMING!
I SEE HIM.
NOTHING.
YOU WANTED TO KNOW ME BETTER? HERE'S YOUR FIRST INSIGHT. THIS IS MY IDEA...
...OF A GOOD TIME.
SIERRA!!!

TAKE IT EASY, MULLIGAN. I HAD THE THING RIGHT WHERE I WANTED IT.
K-CHOW!
SBLAM!
GEEZ!
I... I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU LET THAT BEAST GET SO--
Uh, MULLIGAN...
...YOUR DANCING PARTNER'S BACK FOR MORE!
MOTHER OF GOD ALMIGHTY!
BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!
SON OF A--
--I TOLD YOU WE SHOULD'NA BEEN FOOLIN' AROUND WITH YER FLIPPIN' GAMES!
WUNK!
"YOU ARE SUCH A SORE LOSER, MULLIGAN."

"SORRY, SAKADA, THEY JUST DON'T HAVE THE PARTS ON THIS JERK-WATER WORLD."
IT'S STILL GOING TO BE A DAY OR TWO BEFORE WE'LL HAVE THIS CRATE SPACE-WORTHY AND GET YOU ON YOUR WAY.
WONDERFUL.
THE STRIKEFORCE IS ON SALAZAR DEPLOYING, AND I'M STUCK HERE.
FUNNY HOW THAT WORKS.
WHAT THE HELL...

MY GOD! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!
ME?! HOLD ON A MINUTE!
CALL THE POLICE! DON'T LET HIM GET AWAY!
Aw, for the love of--
I SMELL A FRAME-UP. GUESS NOTHING EVER COMES EASY WHEN YOU WORK FOR THE COMPANY.
SALAZAR VII...
TIME TO SHIFT GEARS, EDEN. BULLETS AREN'T DOING THE JOB.
AW, MAN, NOT THE JUICE!
LET'S GO, EDEN. IT'S TIME.
DAMN, AIN'T THIS PRETTY RISKY BUSINESS?
SO IS HAVING ONE'S SKULL VENTED.
MAN, I DON'T WANNA END UP LIKE THE FIRST TEAM.
WE WON'T END UP LIKE THE FIRST TEAM--
-- THIS TIME, IF WE GET ROASTED ALIVE, IT'LL BE OUR OWN DOING.

COOL! LOOK AT THOSE MONSTERS BURN! I'M GLAD YOU TALKED ME INTO THIS!
HOOSH
YOU DON'T HAVE TO ENJOY IT SO MUCH!
HEY, I LOST A BROTHER TO SOME FRUITCAKE CULT THAT WORSHIPS THESE GOD-AWFUL BUGS!
PARDON ME IF I DON'T WEEP OVER THEIR-- WHOOPS!
LUNK
OW!
HAWKE! BACK HERE!
WHOA! WHOA! WHOA!

HELLLP!
I'M OCCUPIED, EDEN! TRY TO HOLD ON!
THOOM!
GEEZ, HAWKE! HOW'D YA DO THAT?!
I DIDN'T. IT MUST HAVE BEEN LIGHTNING. THE INSULATION IN YOUR SUIT IS ALL THAT SAVED YOU.
LIGHTNING?! THEN--
THE STORM! DAMN!! THE STORM HAS ALREADY HIT! THAT'S WHAT WAS CAUSING THE RADIO STATIC!
WEREN'T THOSE GENIUSES UP IN ORBIT SUPPOSED TO BE WARNIN' US ABOUT STUFF LIKE THIS?
UH-HUH.

OLIVE BRANCH-ALPHA, WHAT'S GOING ON UP THERE? WHY DIDN'T YOU WARN US?
HOLY MACKEREL, THE WIND!
HAWKE
SKTCH... SORRY, BISHOP... .... BEEN TRYING TO... .... SKTCH... STORM JUST TOO SEVERE... SKTCH...
DAMN! LOST THEM!
HAWKE, HEADS UP! THE WIND-- HOLD ON TO SOMETHING!
OH!
HAWKE

WHERE THE BLOODY HELL IS THAT SHIP? WHERE IS HAWKE?
FORGET IT, MULLIGAN. THERE'S NO POINT JUST WANDERING AROUND IN THIS STORM.
SO, WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TA DO, GIVE UP?
WELL, WITH THIS STORM OUTSIDE, AND MILLIONS OF BUGS INSIDE...
... I SUGGEST WE FIND A SAFE NOOK SOMEWHERE, AND :ahem: GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER A LITTLE BETTER.
UH, ARE YOU SUGGESTIN' WHAT I THINK YER SUGGESTIN'?
KNOWING HOW YOUR MIND WORKS, YES, THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I'M SUGGESTING.
HAVE I DIED 'N' GONE TA HEAVEN?
CRUZ
NO, ROBBIE-BOY...
...NOT YET!

SALAZAR VII...
HAWKE?!
SIR, WHERE ARE YOU?! WHAT HAPPENED?
I'M AIRBORNE! THE DAMN STORM GOT ME!
HOLY SPIT, SIR! WHAT ARE YOU DOING UP THERE?
ENJOYING THE SCENERY, WHAT DO YOU THINK?
CAN YOU GRAB IT?!
HAWKE, LOOK OUT! YOU'RE COMING UP ON A STEEPLE!

GOT IT!
GOOD CALL, EDEN! THANKS...
...I THINK.
ELSEWHERE...
I HOPE THE OTHERS ARE DOIN' OKAY.
THEY'RE FINE, MULLIGAN. THEY CAN TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES.
LET'S SEE IF THE SAME IS TRUE FOR YOU.
SLOW DOWN, SIERRA! I--

--BLASTED SON OF A--!!

WEAPONS?! WHERE ARE OUR WEAPONS?!!
WHERE'S MY GUN?!
SBLAM!
FOOM!
AH, THIS MUST BE IT!
... AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE...

GEEZ! I WONDER HOW MANY HOLES IN THE CHEST THESE GUYS CAN TAKE?!
SBLAM! SBLAM! SBLAM!
SORRY.
ACID BLOOD! LOOK OUT, MULLIGAN!
AAGHH!
NOW SHE TELLS ME!
NEXT TIME, I'LL LET YOU KILL THE BUG, AND I'LL HANDLE THE TOUGH JOB OF STANDING AROUND WITH MY MOUTH HANGING OPEN.

BUHL III, DETENTION CENTER...
...JUST COUNT YOURSELF LUCKY, SAKADA...
...LUCKY YOU'VE GOT SOME POWERFUL FRIENDS. I COULD'VE JUST AS EASILY LET THESE PEOPLE STRING YOU UP!
HEY, YOUR SHIP JUST HAPPENS TO BE IN FOR REPAIRS WHEN ONE OF OUR CITIZENS IS BRUTALLY MURDERED?! AND YOU'RE FOUND HOLDING THE BODY?! WHAT DOES THAT LOOK LIKE TO YOU?!
OH, IS THAT HOW IT WORKS ON THIS DIRTBALL WORLD?
COME ON! YOU SAW THE SHAPE THAT KID WAS IN!
YOU'VE PROBABLY GOT AN INFESTATION HERE, AND IF THAT'S THE CASE, YOUR PROBLEMS GO DEEPER THAN ONE DEAD GUY!
EXCUSE ME, CHIEF. WE JUST GOT A REPORT.
YOU'RE SURE ABOUT THIS?
YES, MA'AM.
OKAY, SAKADA, GET OUT OF HERE!
WHAT?
WHY THE SUDDEN ATTACK OF COMMON SENSE?
LOOKS LIKE YOU WERE RIGHT ABOUT THAT INFESTATION.
WHILE YOU WERE IN CUSTODY, ANOTHER PERSON DISAPPEARED.
THINKS HE'S JUST GONNA TAKE OFF?
JUST LIKE THAT?
AND LEAVE US ALONE TO FIGHT THOSE CREATURES?

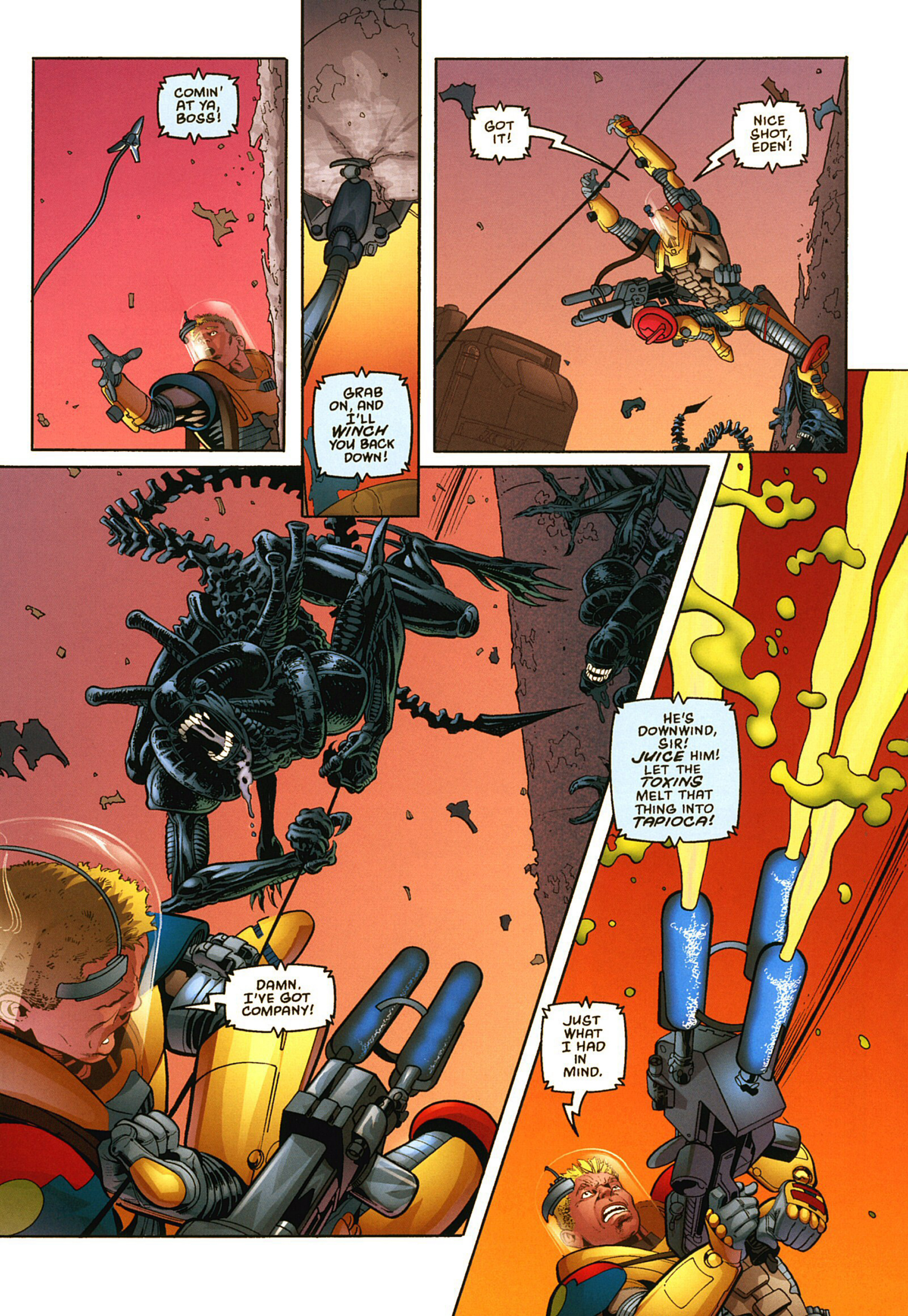
SAKADA! THERE YOU ARE!
WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?!
MY SHIP IS REPAIRED AND I'M LONG OVERDUE ON SALAZAR VII. NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME--
BUT THERE'S STILL A MISSING CHILD--
HEY, IF A CREATURE GOT THE KID, IT'S TOO LATE FOR HIM!
AND IF YOUR WORLD'S INFESTED, THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO ABOUT IT.
I'M JUST ONE MAN.
ONE OF THOSE THINGS KILLED MY SON!
AND, SO HELP ME, THEY'RE GOING TO PAY!
YOU'RE LOOKING FOR REVENGE?! AGAINST A FORCE OF NA--
KRAK!

...YEAH, WE'RE DEFINITELY GETTING A SIGNAL!
LUCKY WE HAD JOSHUA CHIPPED!
WE'LL FIND YOUR KID, BOYD, AND WHEN WE DO--
THIS WAY!
WE'RE ON THE RIGHT TRACK!
THE SIGNAL IS GETTING STRONGER! MUST BE JUST UP AHEAD!
WHOA! WILL YOU LOOK AT THAT?!
WE'RE GONNA GO DOWN THERE?!
WHAT'RE YOU SCARED OF? WE GOT SAKADA'S HOT-SHOT EQUIPMENT!
IT'S THE DEMONS DOWN THERE WHO'VE GOT SOMETHING TO BE NERVOUS ABOUT.
OKAY, BOYD. IT'S YOUR KID DOWN THERE. YOU FIRST.

FLAM! FLAM! FLAM! FLAM!
I SAW SOMETHING! I SAW SOMETHING MOVE!
STOP IT! STOP FIRING, YOU IMBECILE!
DID IT EVER OCCUR TO YOU THAT WHAT YOU SAW MOVING MIGHT BE YOUR SON?!
OH.
YOU MORON!
COME ON, LET'S START CHECKING OUT THESE CAVES.
WHUK

THE TRACER SAYS HE'S SOMEWHERE IN THIS DIRECTION.
CHK--
THERE! I GOT HIM!
K-CHOW! K-CHOW! K-CHOW! K-CHOW!
I NAILED THE MONSTER!

SALAZAR VII...
EDEN? EDEN, ARE YOU OUT THERE SOMEWHERE? I'M A LITTLE OUTNUMBERED UP HERE!
UH, OKAY, SIR, WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO ABOUT IT?
I DON'T KNOW. IMPROVISE!
AND HURRY!
SHKKKK
...OKAY, SIR, IMPROVISING...
HOOSH!


COMIN' AT YA, BOSS!
GRAB ON, AND I'LL WINCH YOU BACK DOWN!
GOT IT!
NICE SHOT, EDEN!
DAMN. I'VE GOT COMPANY!
HE'S DOWNWIND, SIR! JUICE HIM! LET THE TOXINS MELT THAT THING INTO TAPIOCA!
JUST WHAT I HAD IN MIND.

HE'S STILL COMING! AND HE DOESN'T LOOK PLEASED!
LIGHT HIM UP, SIR! LIGHT HIM UP!
I'M TRYING! CAN'T SHIFT THE SETTING--
GOT IT!
KROOSH!
YOW, THAT WAS SHAVIN' IT A BIT CLOSE!
TAKE A NOTE. THESE FIREARMS MIGHT DO WITH A FEW MODIFICATIONS.
BUHL III...
MY GOD, LOOK AT HIM! WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?!
HE'S DEAD! SCHENKEL IS DEAD!

I'LL TELL YOU WHAT HAPPENED! CONNERS THOUGHT SCHENKEL WAS THE CREATURE!
IT WASN'T ME! THE CREATURE GOT HIM!
THAT INSANE GUN OF SAKADA'S! YOU KILLED SCHENKEL!
DID I KILL HIM?!
LET'S HEAR YOUR ANSWER, BOYD, AND MAKE IT A GOOD ONE BECAUSE YOU'RE GOING TO STICK WITH IT! DID I KILL HIM?!
N-NO. IT-IT WASN'T YOU.
IT WAS THE CREATURE. THE CREATURE MUST'VE GOT HIM.
SMART ANSWER, BOYD.
BELOW...
I SAW SOMETHING MOVE! IT WAS GOING TO POUNCE ON US!
HOLD IT! THAT STUFF IS BURNING MY EYES! I CAN'T BREATHE!
THAT STUFF IS POISON, MAN! YOU'RE POISONING US!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?! THE CREATURE'S GONNA KILL US, NOT THIS STUFF!

OH, MY GOD, THERE IT IS!
OVER THERE! I SEE IT!
HEY! WATCH IT! WATCH IT!
AUGH! THAT STUFF, IT'S--
OH, NO!
NO! NO! NO!
HAAUGHN!
AAIIEEEEEE!

WHAT'S GOING ON DOWN THERE?
FUMES! TOXIC FUMES!
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!
WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER GUYS? THEY'RE STILL DOWN THERE!
IT'S TOO LATE FOR THEM! WE'D NEVER REACH THEM THROUGH THAT POISON!
YOU-- YOU MEAN WE'RE JUST GOING TO LET THEM DIE?!
SAKADA?!
GIVE ME THAT GUN!
WHERE'S THE REST OF MY GEAR?!
WITH THE OTHERS... BUT YOU CAN'T GO DOWN THERE! IT'S SUICIDE!
GET OUT OF HERE, BEFORE YOU GET SOMEONE ELSE KILLED!
BUT--
I SAID GET OUT!

HELP US... HELP US...
...PLEASE...
DEAR LORD.
...th-THE GUN...?
...WHY ARE YOU TAKING THE GUN...?
...NO... NO, YOU CAN'T...!

NNNOOOOOOO--
FWOOSH!

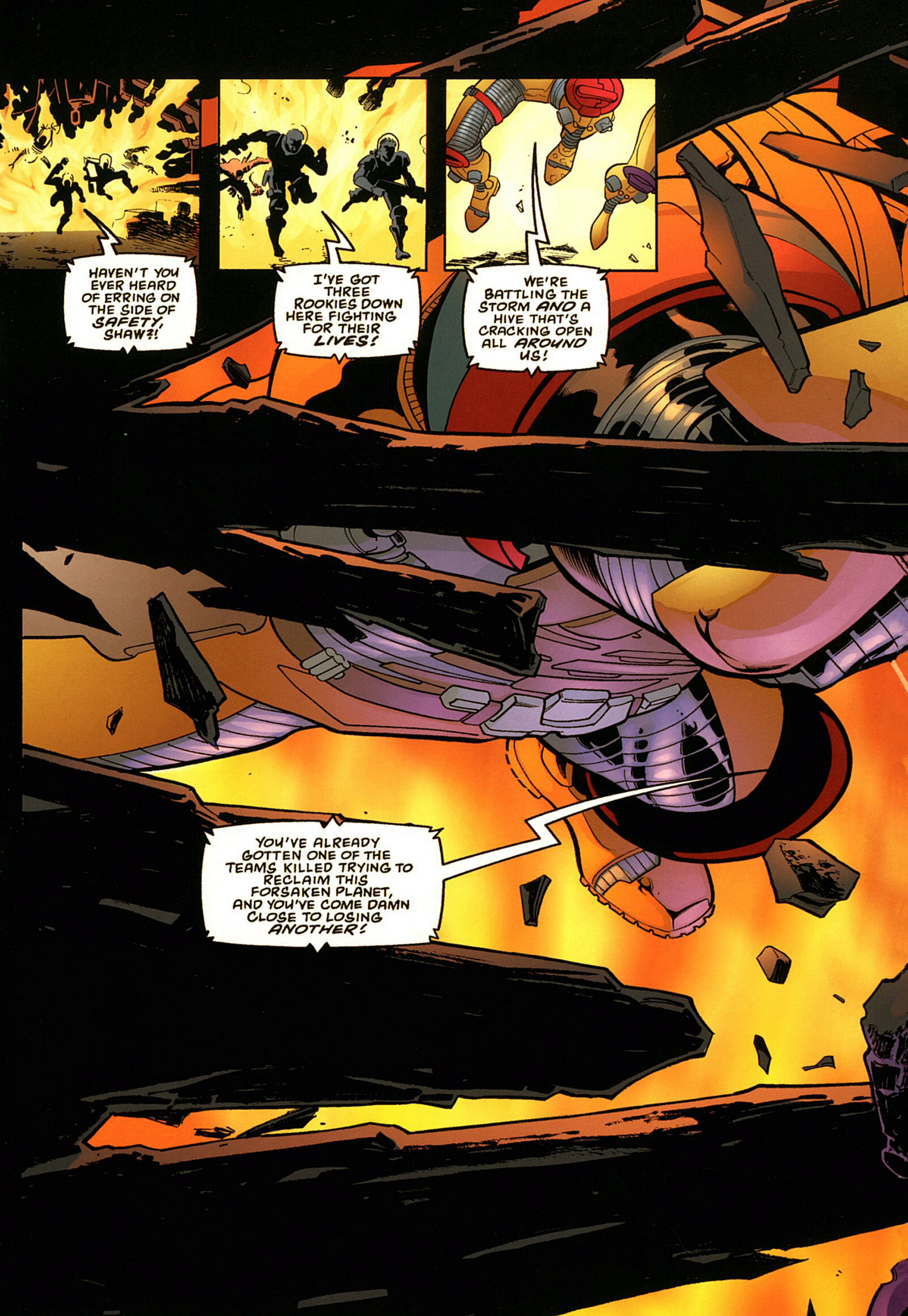
WHERE ARE THEY? WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM?
THEY'RE GONE.
GONE?! WHAT HAPPENED? WHAT DID YOU DO?
I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING.
EXCEPT LET A PACK OF BACKWOODS IDIOTS GET AHOLD OF WEAPONRY THAT IS WAY OUT OF THEIR LEAGUE.
HEY! OVER HERE!
IT'S JOSHUA! HE'S OKAY!
JOSHUA! GOOD LORD! WE THOUGHT YOU WERE--
--WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU, BOY?! WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUT HERE?!
W-WE WERE PLAYING. I GOT LOST.
WAIT A MINUTE!
THE KID IS OKAY! HE WASN'T CAPTURED BY ANY CREATURE!
LOOKS THAT WAY.
HOLD ON! IF THE CREATURE DIDN'T GET THIS KID, HOW DO WE KNOW THERE WAS EVER A CREATURE AT ALL?
I GUESS WE DON'T.
THEN WHAT THE HELL KILLED MY SON?
MAYBE A CREATURE. MAYBE ONE OF YOU.

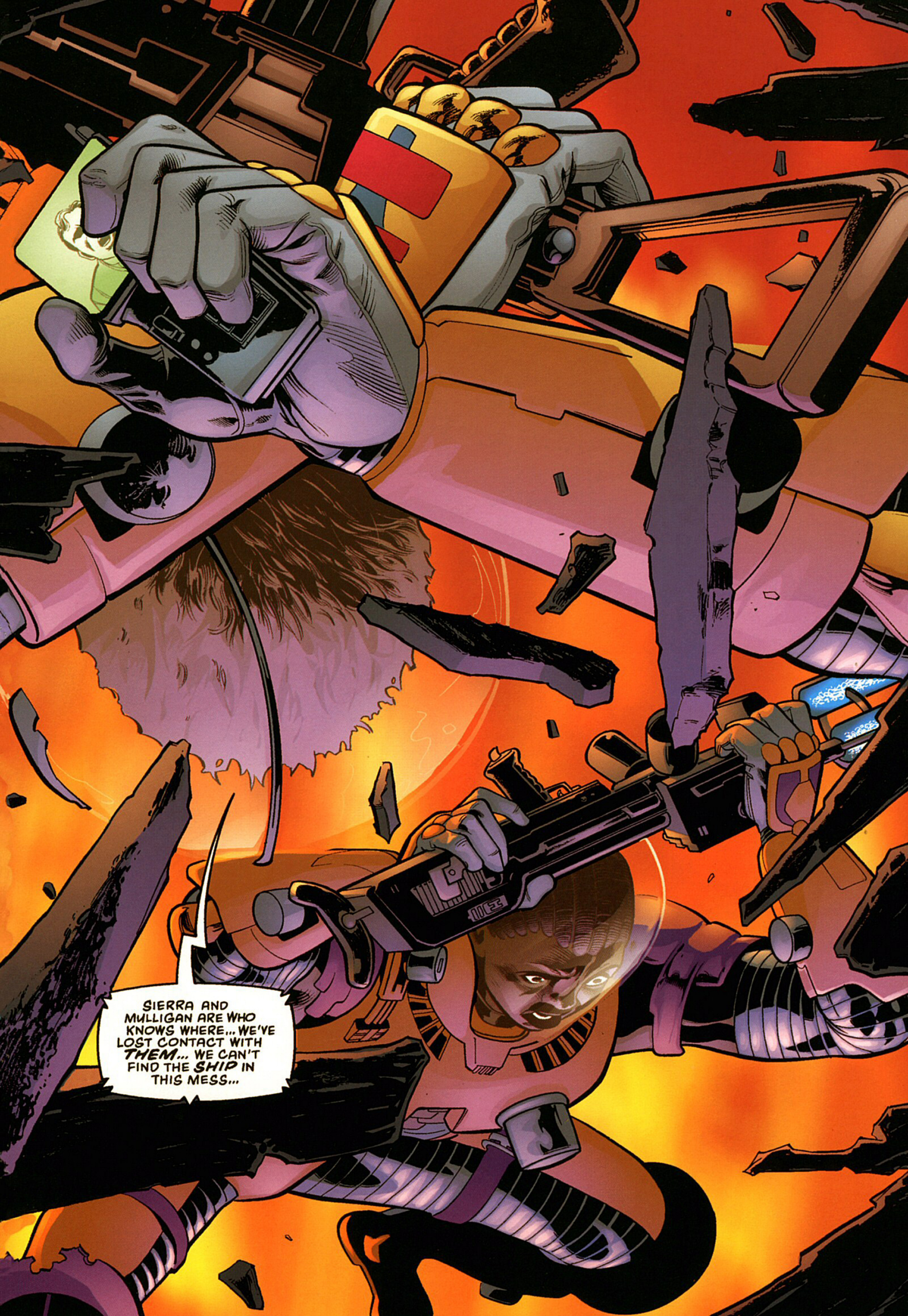
OFFHAND, I'D SAY YOU FOLKS HAVE A LOT TO THINK ABOUT.
"... SO, YOU'RE FINALLY ON YOUR WAY TO SALAZAR, eh, SAKADA?"
NO THANKS TO YOU WIZARDS.
AU CONTRAIRE! THOSE HILLBILLIES DOWN THERE REALLY THOUGHT YOU'D KILLED THEIR CHILD!
AND?
AND WE COULD'VE LET THEM HAVE YOU. YOU'D BE DANGLING FROM A ROPE RIGHT NOW.
JUST REMEMBER THAT IF YOU EVER GET THE URGE TO CROSS US.
YOU AND THE COMPANY WANT A PIECE OF ME?
COME AND GET ME.

"WE'LL SEE WHO'S LEFT STANDING."
SALAZAR VII...
SSSSKREEEE
EDEN, WHERE ARE YOU? I COULD USE SOME HELP HERE!
I'VE JUICED THIS THING, I'VE TORCHED IT, AND IT'S STILL COMING!
EDEN?
KRISH!
EDEN?!
PLUTH
THAT SHOULD DO IT, SIR, THEY'RE NOT SO TOUGH...
...EDEN... THANKS...
YOU GONNA BE OKAY, HAWKE?
...I'LL SURVIVE... BUT I'VE GOT TO WONDER...

"... ARE MULLIGAN AND SIERRA GOING THROUGH THE SAME KIND OF HELL WE ARE?"
WHOA.
IT'S STILL COMIN'! FIVE HOLES CLEAR THROUGH IT, AND IT'S STILL COMIN'!
I'M PUTTIN' A STOP TA THIS, IF IT'S THE LAST THING I DO!
THAT SHOULD DO THE TRICK!
AND NO MORE GAMES!
IT'S BACK INTA OUR SUITS!
AW, THAT'S NO FUN.
FUN, LADY, IS LIVIN' TA TELL THE TALE!
NOW, ARE YOU GONNA HELP ME WITH THIS, OR WHAT?
SURE, SWEET-HEART...
... WHATEVER YOU SAY!
TZZ-ZZ-ZZT

-- IKEFORCE ONE, DO YOU READ ME? REPEAT, DO YOU READ ME, STRIKEFORCE ONE?
SHAW?! IS THAT YOU?!
HAWKE?! ARE YOU OKAY? WHAT'S YOUR SITUATION?
SHAW, WHERE THE HELL HAVE YOU BEEN?! WHY DIDN'T YOU WARN US THE STORM WAS COMING?
THAT'S OUR FAULT, STRIKEFORCE ONE... WERE TRYING TO MONITOR THE STORM AS CLOSELY AS POSSIBLE...
... BUT THE ATMOSPHERIC INTERFERENCE JUST WENT OFF THE SCALE...
... THERE WAS AN INTERRUPTION IN READINGS... WE DIDN'T REALIZE THE STORM WAS MOVING SO FAST... SIMPLY DROPPED THE BALL ON THIS ONE...
ALEXANDER


HAVEN'T YOU EVER HEARD OF ERRING ON THE SIDE OF SAFETY, SHAW?!
I'VE GOT THREE ROOKIES DOWN HERE FIGHTING FOR THEIR LIVES!
WE'RE BATTLING THE STORM AND A HIVE THAT'S CRACKING OPEN ALL AROUND US!
YOU'VE ALREADY GOTTEN ONE OF THE TEAMS KILLED TRYING TO RECLAIM THIS FORSAKEN PLANET, AND YOU'VE COME DAMN CLOSE TO LOSING ANOTHER!


SIERRA AND MULLIGAN ARE WHO KNOWS WHERE... WE'VE LOST CONTACT WITH *THEM*... WE CAN'T FIND THE *SHIP* IN THIS MESS...

CHECK THAT, FEARLESS LEADER! LOOK WHAT I JUST FOUND!
HOLD ON! EDEN'S SPOTTED THE SHIP, BUT IT LOOKS TO BE DAMAGED FROM THE STORM.
LOOK, HAWKE, JUST HANG IN THERE... SEND YOU A RESCUE SHIP... SOON AS ...ORM SETTLES DOWN...
...HANG IN THERE...
WE'VE LOST HIM.
FAT LOT OF GOOD HE WAS DOING US, ANYWAY.
COME ON. LET'S GET TO THE SHIP AND ASSESS THE DAMAGE.
SIERRA, DIDJA HEAR THAT? IT WAS HAWKE!
TALKING TO THE ORBITAL BASE, I KNOW.
AN' THEY'VE FOUND THE SHIP!
JUDGING BY THE WAY THE SIGNAL CAME IN, I'M GUESSING THEY'RE OFF IN THAT DIRECTION.
CRUZ
WHAT DO YOU SAY, MULLIGAN? SHALL WE GO FOR IT?
STORM'S LET UP AS MUCH AS IT'S GONNA. LET'S DO IT!
KKRRMMMM
LOOK OUT!
Ahh!

BKKRRKMMMM
HURRY! TRY TO--
WHAT'S THE MATTER? IS IT STUCK? CAN'T YOU GET IT OPEN?
I'M TRYING!
WHEN I GET IT OPEN, YOU'LL BE THE FIRST TO KNOW!
SORRY! I WAS JUST TRYIN' TO MAKE A LITTLE CONVERSA--

GOT IT.
AW, CRIPES! THOSE UGLY SUCKERS ARE EVERYWHERE!
GYAAH! LET GO OF ME, YOU CARNIVOROUS FREAK!

AW, MAN! IF THE BUGS DON'T GET US WE'RE GONNA DROWN!
DON'T PANIC, EDEN! WE'VE GOT OXYGEN SUPPLIES. THESE SUITS ARE AIRTIGHT.
A LITTLE JUICE WILL CHASE THEM OFF, LIKE BUG REPELLENT!
EASY WITH THAT STUFF, EDEN. IT'S FATAL TO US TOO, YOU KNOW. WE DON'T WANT TO BE SWIMMING IN IT!
WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO? HITTIN' THESE JOKERS WITH BULLETS IS NEAR IMPOSSIBLE!
WE TAKE EVASIVE AND GET OUT OF HERE AS QUICK AS WE--
--NNG!
HANG IN, THERE, HAWKE! THIS LITTLE BLADE OUGHT TO DO THE TRICK!

HACK! HACK!
EDEN, THAT'S ENOUGH!
THIS IS THE WAY TO FIGHT 'EM!
EDEN, STOP! THE CREATURE'S ACID BLOOD IS FLOODING INTO THE WATER...
...IT'S GOING TO COMPROMISE OUR SUITS!
LET'S JUST GET OUT OF HERE AS QUICKLY AS WE CAN.
AND, uh, THANKS FOR BAILING ME OUT DOWN THERE.
Heh, I SAVED YOUR BISCUITS FOR ONCE, DIDN'T I?

... BUT THEN, WHAT *IS* PAIN, AFTER ALL? JUST A NEUROLOGICAL RESPONSE.
A CHEMICAL *PHENOMENON* THAT TAKES PLACE WITHIN YOUR BRAIN...

...A SENSATION. AN ILLUSION.
DON'T TELL ME ABOUT PAIN, MY FRIEND.
OH, HONESTLY, NOT THAT SOB STORY AGAIN! LET THE MEDIEVAL MEDICINE MEN BLEED YOU TO DEATH. NOW, THAT'S PAIN!
OKAY, BOYS, ENOUGH CHATTER, PUT A SOCK IN IT!
IMPUDENT WENCH! HOW DARE YOU! WHY IN MY DAY--
I SAID SHUT UP! OR I'LL KICK ALL YOUR SORRY CANS TO KRAKATAU!
Ah, YES... KRAKATAU, AN ACTIVE VOLCANO LOCATED IN THE SUNDRA STRAIGHT... SOUTH OF SUMATRA AND WEST OF EARTH...
...AN ERUPTION OF WHICH ON AUGUST 27, 1883 GENERATED THE MOST VIOLENT EXPLOSION EVER TO HAVE OCCURRED IN THE MODERN HISTORY OF EARTH...
...ERUPTION...

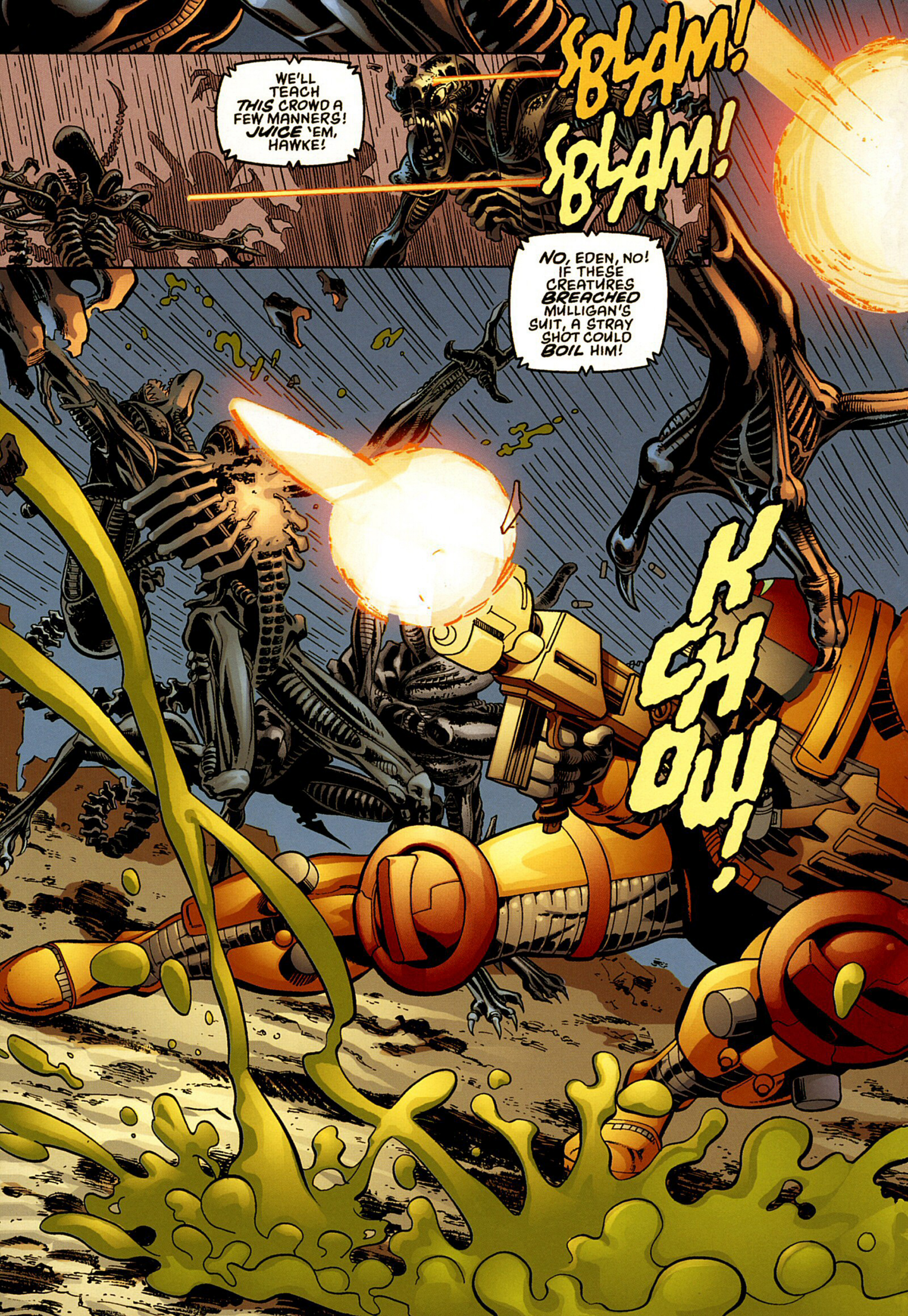
SKREEEEE
...WHA...
WHY CAN'T IT EVER BE A HANDSOME PRINCE? OR HAWKE? I'D EVEN SETTLE FOR MULLIGAN!
BUT, NO, I GET RESCUED BY AN ACID-DRIPPING KILLING MACHINE THAT JUST WANTS TO USE MY CARCASS FOR A COCOON.
K-CHOW! K-CHOW! K-CHOW!
IT IS GETTING SO HARD TO MEET A NICE GUY THESE DAYS.

HEY, MULLIGAN? ARE YOU STILL WITH US? I COULD USE A LITTLE BACKUP HERE IF YOU'RE UP TO IT.
CRUZ
Huh? SIERRA...?
MULLIGAN! WELCOME BACK. WHAT'S YOUR STATUS?
SPBLAM! SPBLAM! SPBLAM!
...uh... I'M OKAY, I THINK... A WEE BIT ON THE SORE SIDE, BUT OKAY...
...I SEEM TO BE UNTHREATENED AT THE MOMENT.
...uh, CHECK THAT... I'VE GOT A BIT OF COMPANY...
MULLIGAN
...MAKE THAT, A LOT OF COMPANY.

S-SIERRA? SIERRA, ARE YOU OUT THERE?
I'M OUT HERE, MULLIGAN. I'VE DISPOSED OF MY DANCING PARTNER. I'LL BE WITH YOU IN A SECOND.
YOU MIGHT WANT TO HURRY ON THAT, LASS.
YOU'RE OKAY, MULLIGAN. USE THE JUICE!
THE SPRAY WILL DRIVE THEM OFF!
RIGHT. JUST GIVE ME A SEC--
WHAT THE BLOODY HELL'S WRONG WITH THIS THING?!
IT'S DEAD! THIS BLAMED THING IS DEAD! IT'S NOT FIRING!

SIERRA! OPEN FIRE ON 'EM! COME ON!
CRUZ
GOOD GOD, LASS, WHAT ARE YA WAITIN' FOR?! FIRE!
SIERRA!
HELP ME! FOR THE LOVE OF--

DOOM!
TAH-DAH! CAVALRY'S HERE!
GET OFF HIM, YA DEMENTED FREAKS!
PLAM!
HURRY! MULLIGAN'S ONLY GOT SECONDS--
BLAM!
HERE'S A FRESH WEAPON. JOIN IN WHEN YOU LIKE.
Th-THANKYA...
NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT.


WE'LL TEACH THIS CROWD A FEW MANNERS! JUICE 'EM, HAWKE!
BLAM!
BLAM!
NO, EDEN, NO! IF THESE CREATURES BREACHED MULLIGAN'S SUIT, A STRAY SHOT COULD BOIL HIM!
KCHOW!

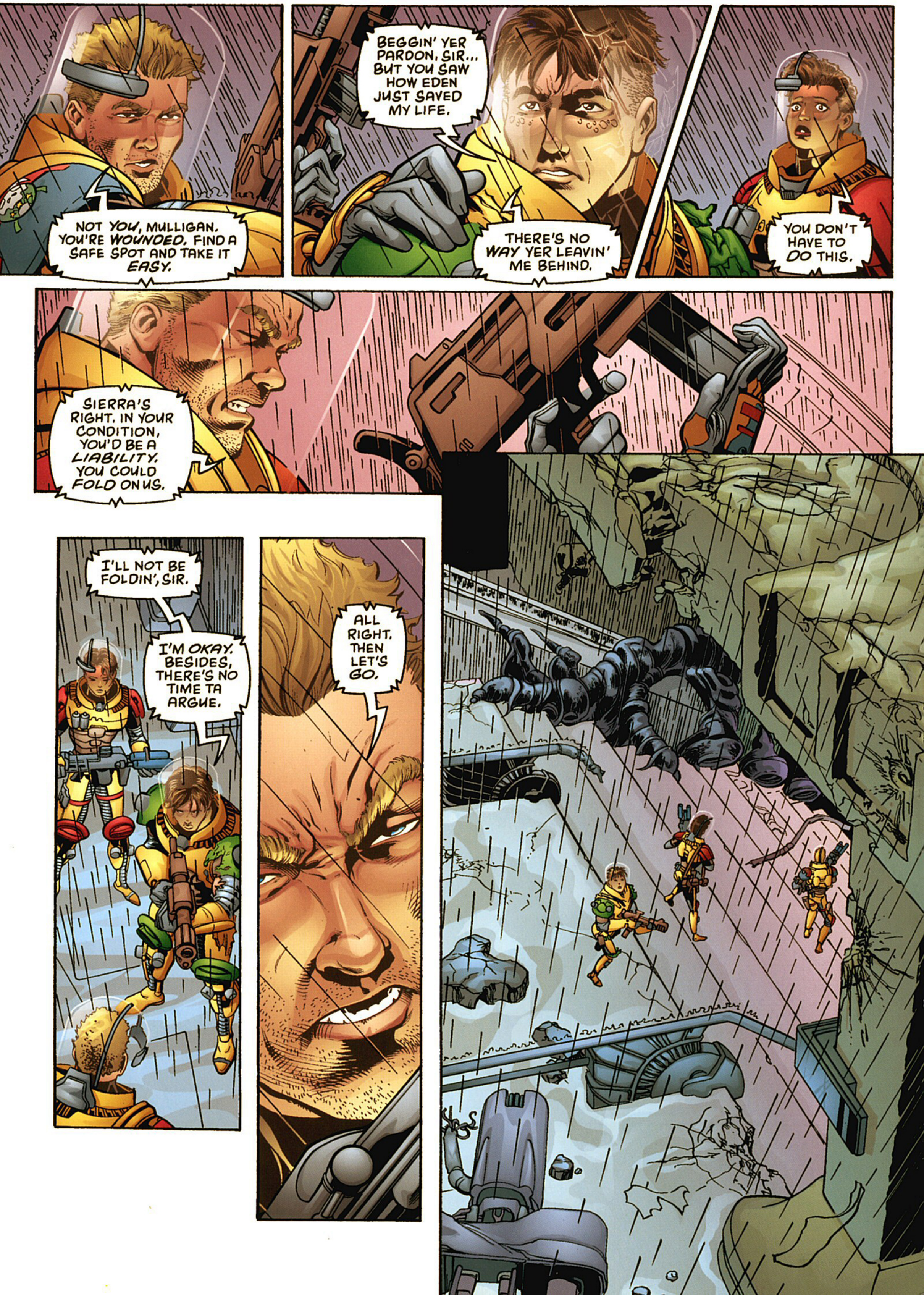
YOU ACID-DRIPPING, FORSAKEN DEVILS!
K-CHOW! BLAM! K-CHOW!
WHAK!
POOM! POOM!
MOTHER OF...

NOTHING LIKE FRESH AMMO TO EVEN THE ODDS!
SIERRA?! LONG TIME, NO ACTION! WHAT WERE YA THINKIN', LASS?!
S-SORRY, MULLIGAN! I FROZE... I... I DON'T KNOW WHAT CAME OVER ME...
WE'LL GO OVER THE GAME FILMS LATER, PEOPLE! LET'S KEEP OUR FOCUS!
WE'VE STILL GOT OUR HANDS MORE THAN FULL WITH THESE THINGS!

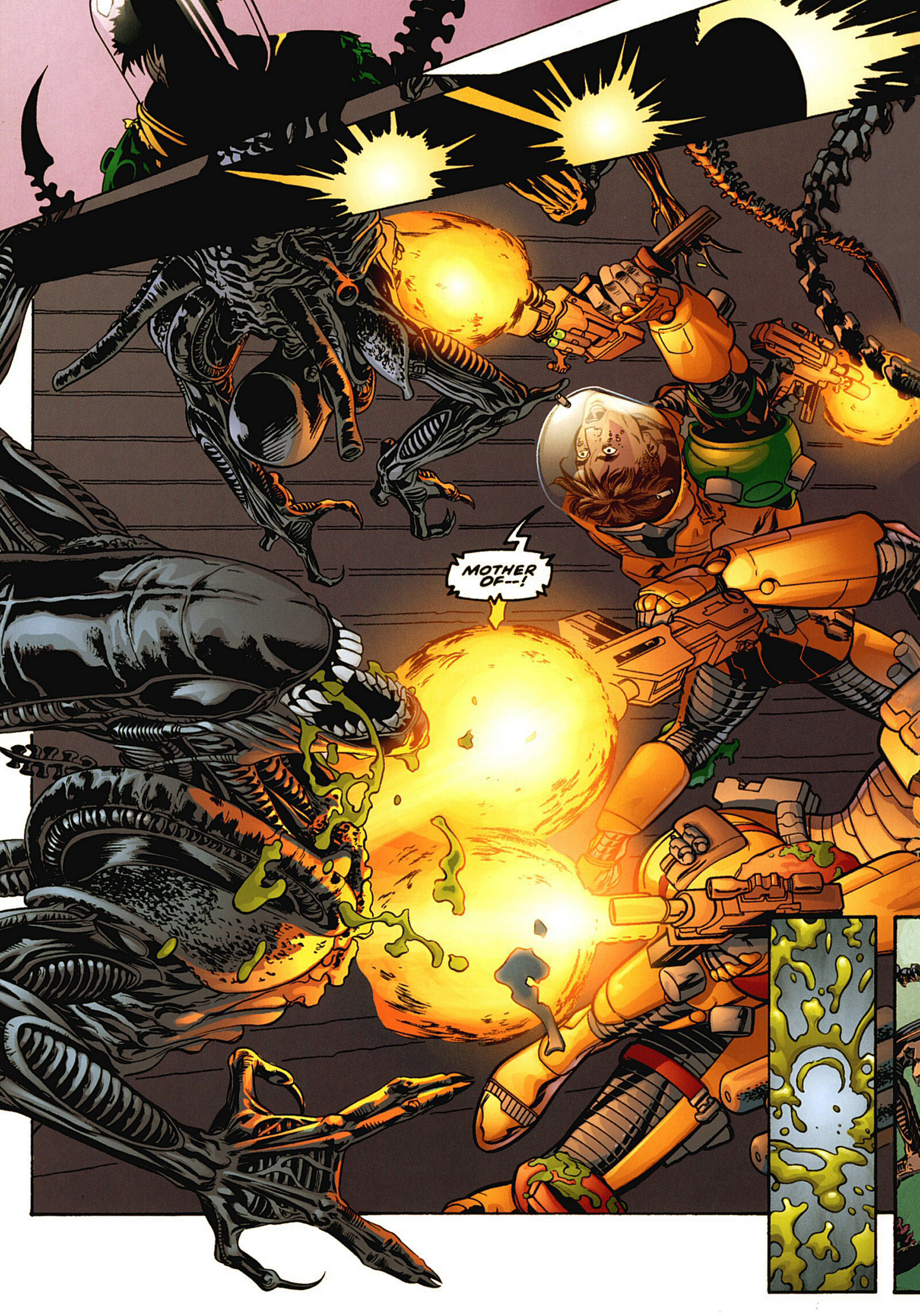
STAY BACK, MULLIGAN! I'M GOING TO FINISH THEM OFF!
STAY UPWIND. WITH THAT WOUND, YOUR SUIT'S NO LONGER AIRTIGHT.
LIGHT THEM UP, SIERRA. MINIMIZE THE SPREAD OF THIS POISON AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.
RIGHT.
WOULD'JA LOOK AT THOSE BEASTIES ROAST! Y'KNOW, I USED TA FEEL A LITTLE SORRY FOR 'EM, BUT THAT WILL NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN!

YOU OKAY, MULLIGAN? WHAT HAPPENED?
MALFUNCTION, SIR... JUICE UNIT WENT DEAD.
HERE'S YOUR PROBLEM. THIS COUPLING CAME LOOSE. THAT SHOULD NOT HAVE HAPPENED.
MULLIGAN
SIR, IT WAS MY FAULT. I FROZE. I-I PANICKED...
...I NEARLY COST MULLIGAN HIS LIFE.
CRUZ
WE'LL TALK ABOUT YOUR PERFORMANCE LATER, SIERRA.
SWEET MOTHER-- WHERE'S EDEN?!

...what...?
...what the hell...?
TH-THEY GOT ME! HAWKE! SOMEBODY! THOSE UGLY COCKROACHES GOT ME!
OH, NO! THIS IS THEIR HIVE!
OVER THERE! I SAW THEM! THEY TOOK EDEN DOWN THERE!
THEN THERE'S NO CHOICE. WE GO IN AND GET HER.
INTO A HIVE?! MOTHER OF MERCY.


NOT YOU, MULLIGAN. YOU'RE WOUNDED. FIND A SAFE SPOT AND TAKE IT EASY.
BEGGIN' YER PARDON, SIR... BUT YOU SAW HOW EDEN JUST SAVED MY LIFE.
THERE'S NO WAY YER LEAVIN' ME BEHIND.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS.
SIERRA'S RIGHT. IN YOUR CONDITION, YOU'D BE A LIABILITY. YOU COULD FOLD ON US.
I'LL NOT BE FOLDIN', SIR.
I'M OKAY. BESIDES, THERE'S NO TIME TA ARGUE.
ALL RIGHT. THEN LET'S GO.

ARE WE REALLY GOING THROUGH WITH THIS?
HAWKE, WE'RE MARCHING DIRECTLY INTO A HIVE TEEMING WITH MILLIONS OF THOSE THINGS, AND YOU'RE BRINGING ALONG A LIABILITY LIKE MULLIGAN?!
HE'S WOUNDED! HIS SUIT'S COMPROMISED! IF WE USE THE JUICE, ITS TOXINS WILL SEEP INTO HIS SUIT AND COOK HIM ALIVE!
HAWKE
NONE OF THIS IS NEWS TO ME, SIERRA!
IT'S JUST TOO BAD SOMEONE FROZE IN ACTION AND GOT US INTO THIS MESS.
OUR TEAMMATE IS IN THERE AND WE'VE GOT MINUTES, MAYBE SECONDS, TO SAVE HER LIFE.
MULLIGAN INSISTS ON COMING AND WE DON'T HAVE THE TIME TO ARGUE!


MOTHER OF--!

LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH!
CRU

MOTHER A' MERCY! THEY'RE COMIN' FASTER THAN WE CAN CUT 'EM DOWN!
YOU'RE RIGHT, MULLIGAN. PROTECT YOURSELF AS BEST YOU CAN, BECAUSE WE'VE GOT NO CHOICE BUT TO JUICE THEM!
HAWKE
LET'S GO, SIERRA! HIT IT!
THEY'RE STILL COMING! THEY'RE INSANE!
CRUZ
"NOT REALLY. THE HIVE NEEDS HOSTS AND THIS IS THE MOST DIRECT WAY OF GETTING THEM."
BUT EVEN SO, THIS IS GETTING RIDICULOUS.
TORCH THEM!

KAFF KOFF DAMN! BLOODY HELL! KACK
WHAT'S WRONG, MULLIGAN...?
OKAY, MULLIGAN OUT OF HERE-- NOW!
ACK! KAFF
HE GOT A TASTE OF THE JUICE. JUST A SPECK, NO DOUBT, OR HE WOULDN'T BE SO CHEERFUL ABOUT IT!
THIS SHOULD WASH MOST OF THE TOXINS OUT. IT'S STILL GOING TO STING FOR A WHILE.
BLASTED SON OF A--
NOW DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHY YOU'VE GOT TO STAY BEHIND? IT ISN'T A QUESTION OF COURAGE OR HONOR-- IT'S A QUESTION OF THROWING LIVES AWAY!
Y-YER RIGHT, SIR. SORRY, SIR...
YOU STAY HERE. KEEP OUR AVENUE OF ESCAPE OPEN. KEEP TRYING TO CONTACT OLIVE BRANCH PRIME... HAVE THEM SEND BACKUP AS SOON AS THEY CAN.
Y-YOU GOT IT, SIR!

GEORGE... ABE...
...HOW NICE OF YOU TO LOOK IN ON ME...
EASY ON THE OLD FRAME, THERE, IF YOU DON'T MIND...
HAD A LITTLE ACCIDENT...
"SEEMS A SHAME TO JUST LEAVE IT LIKE THAT...
"...I'M THINKING OF HAVING A PICTURE TUBE INSTALLED.
"...OR SOMETHING, Y'KNOW, TASTEFUL. A CLOCK, WITH ROMAN NUMERALS.
"OR A FISHBOWL. NOW, THAT WOULD BE SOMETHING."
Oh...
Oh, BROTHER, THAT SMARTS...
Oh, GEORGE... ABE...
...YOU REALLY KNOW HOW TO HURT A GUY...

K-CHOW!
SPBLAM!
K-CHOW!
K-CHOW!
SPBLAM!
POP
POP
POP
SPBLAM!
POP
POP
POP
POP
"NICE SHOOTING. TOO BAD YOU COULDN'T PERFORM LIKE THAT WHEN MULLIGAN'S LIFE WAS ON THE LINE."
HSSSSSSSSSS

CRUZ
I TOLD YOU, I FROZE.
THINGS GOT TOO INTENSE. IT HAPPENS.
NOT TO YOU, IT DOESN'T.
AND DON'T THINK THIS IS GOING TO GET BRUSHED UNDER THE RUG! WE WILL HASH THIS OUT, PUT ALL OUR CARDS ON THE TABLE, AND DETERMINE EXACTLY WHAT WENT ON UP THERE.
UNLESS, OF COURSE, YOU PLAN TO GET RID OF ME BY "FREEZING" IN ACTION AGAIN.

SAKADA! SO NICE OF YOU TO DROP IN ON US. WE THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER SHOW UP.
GIVE IT UP, SHAW!
IT'S NOT MY FAULT YOU BROUGHT ME HERE IN A PIECE OF JUNK THAT COULDN'T TOP LIGHT-SPEED WITHOUT BLOWING A GASKET!
NOW, WHAT'S THE STATUS OF THE TEAM?
UNKNOWN. THE STORM'S STILL TOO SEVERE--
SCREW THE STORM. GET A SHUTTLE READY, WITH A FULLY ARMED ROVER!
I'M GOING DOWN THERE TO PULL THOSE PEOPLE OUT!
SAKADA, I'M NOT LOSING A PERFECTLY GOOD SHUTTLE SO THAT YOU CAN--
STOP ME.

WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!
I MEAN IT, UGLY!! LET GO OF ME!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
STOP...

OH, MAN-- IT HELD! MY VISOR HELD!
KKK-
KRAK!

KSSH!
AAAHH!

PLUTH
SPLUCK!
SPLOOTH
BLOOM!
HOPE YOU DON'T MIND THE INTRUSION...
IT LOOKED LIKE YOU WERE GETTING RATHER ATTACHED TO THAT THING.
MULLIGAN TA OLIVE BRANCH PRIME. OVER.
MULLIGAN TA OLIVE BRANCH PRIME. DO YOU--

WH-WHAT'RE YOU GUYS DOIN' HERE?
IN MY CASE, REPAYING A DEBT.
GO, SIERRA! GET EDEN OUT OF HERE! I'M USING THE JUICE!
CHOOOoo!
YOU WOULDN'T BE IN THIS JAM IF I HADN'T SCREWED UP WHEN MULLIGAN WAS SURROUNDED.
YOU PULLED HIS FAT OUT OF THE FIRE, NOW IT'S OUR TURN TO DO THE SAME FOR YOU.
K-CHOW!
K-CHOW!
GET CLEAR, EVERYBODY! THIS WHOLE PLACE IS GOIN' TO GO UP!
NOW!
CHKK
KA-THOOM!

OKAY, LET'S GO! HURRY!
THE COMMOTION IS GOING TO DRAW THE REST OF THE HIVE TO SEE WHAT'S WRONG, AND WE DO NOT WANT TO BE WAITING HERE WHEN THE CROWDS SHOW UP.
HERE, I'LL TAKE EDEN! WE'VE GOT TO HAUL!
IT'S OKAY. I'VE GOT HER. LET'S GO.
YUCK! WHAT THE HELL ARE WE WALKING THROUGH? IT SMELLS FOUL!
DISCARDS. CARCASSES THAT WERE USED AS HOSTS BY THOSE THINGS.
HAWKE
OH, GAWD! I'M GONNA PUKE!
INSIDE A HELMET. GOOD THINKING.
DID YOU SAY SOMETHING, SIERRA?
OW! WATCH IT.
IT WASN'T ME.
WHAT THE #%@# IS THAT?!

DR. LIVINGSTON, I PRESUME.
WHO IN THE NAME OF GOD?
LOOK AT THE NAMEPLATE!
XERXES! FROM THE FIRST DOOMED MISSION.
BUT THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE!
HIGHLY IMPROBABLE, MY DEAR WATSON, BUT NOT IMPOSSIBLE.
WHAT, AFTER ALL, IS A BLOWN-OUT CHEST TO SOMEONE CURSED WITH IMMORTALITY?

HEADS UP! THEY'RE BACK!
AW, MAN! I WAS WONDERIN' HOW LONG 'TIL THOSE UGLY COCKROACHES CAUGHT UP TO US!
GEORGE! ABE! YOU BROUGHT THE WHOLE GANG!
WE'VE GOT OURSELVES SURROUNDED! WE'D BETTER USE THE JUICE!
NEGATIVE! EDEN'S VISOR'S BEEN COMPROMISED, AND XERXES IS UNPROTECTED-- THEY'D COOK IN THE JUICE!
THEN I HOPE YOU'VE GOT AN ALTERNATIVE PLAN! WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF OPTIONS!
K-CHOW!
SPBLAM!
HAWKE?!
JUST KEEP FIGHTING!
AND PRAY.
K-CHOW! K-CHOW!
SKRASH!

BA-DOOM!
WELL? WHAT'RE YA WAITIN' FOR?! HOP ABOARD!
BA-DOOM!
BA-DOOM!
MULLIGAN--? HOW--?
SAKADA MADE IT DOWN THROUGH THE STORM, AN' FOUND ME GUARDIN' THE ENTRANCE...
...SO WE SET OUT IN SEARCH A' YOU FOLKS!
LUCKILY, YA LEFT A PRETTY DECENT TRAIL A' DEVASTATION!
THANKS, SAKADA, YOU BAILED US OUT OF A TOUGH ONE.
HEY, THOSE PANTY-WAIST BUREAUCRATS WEREN'T GOING TO DO ANYTHING. SOMEBODY HAD TO.

THE STORM'S STILL BLOWING PRETTY GOOD, BUT I THINK I CAN GET US OUT OF HERE.
IT'S NOT TOO BAD, I'LL BE OKAY ONCE WE GET SOME PROPER MEDICAL ATTENTION.
SO, WHAT THE HELL WENT ON DOWN THERE?
WHAT HAPPENED TO MULLIGAN?
YOU DON'T WANT TO KNOW.
SIERRA, IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER, I'D SWEAR YOU WERE LOSING YOUR TOUCH.
SHUT UP!
EASY, SAKADA, I'LL HANDLE THIS THING WITH SIERRA.
I'M SURE YOU WILL.
HAWKE

"WELL, WE'LL ASSUME YOU ALL AREN'T JUST SUFFERING SOME MASS DELUSION..."
THIS GUY IS XERXES. HIS DNA CONFIRMS THAT. BUT YOU'RE TRYING TO TELL ME A CHEST-BURSTER GOT HIM. THAT'S NONSENSE.
HE'S HAD SOME SORT OF TRAUMA TO THE RIBCAGE, BUT IT'S ALMOST COMPLETELY HEALED. HIS INTERNALS ALL SEEM TO BE IN ORDER.
WHATEVER HAPPENED DOWN THERE, HE'S BASICALLY RECOVERED FROM IT.
WE KNOW WHAT WE SAW DOWN THERE. HIS CHEST WAS OPEN.
WHAT CAN I SAY? THE MEDICAL EVIDENCE DOESN'T BACK YOU UP.
"I GUESS OUR FRIEND IN THERE IS GOING TO REMAIN SOMETHING OF AN ENIGMA."
MAN, I'M GONNA SLEEP FOR A WEEK!
I'M SHOOTIN' FOR TWO WEEKS!
SO, WHERE'S HAWKE?
DEBRIEFING.

WELL, ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.
I SAID--
YOU KNEW THAT STORM WAS COMING, DIDN'T YOU? YOU WANTED US TO GET STRANDED.
THAT'S RIDICULOUS--
AND SOMETHING'S GOING ON WITH SIERRA! SHE'S GOT SOME KIND OF AGENDA-- YOURS, I PRESUME!
YOU KNOW, HAWKE, PARANOIA DOESN'T BECOME YOU.
WHILE TREACHERY FITS YOU LIKE A GLOVE!
BUT REMEMBER THIS, SHAW. I'M GOING TO FIND OUT EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED DOWN THERE... AND IF WHAT I SUSPECT IS TRUE...
...I'LL KILL YOU.

XENOGENESIS
BRODIE
STEWART

script
TOM and **MARY BIERBAUM**

pencils
DAVID ROSS

inks
ANDREW PEPOY

colors
DAN JACKSON

lettering
SEAN KONOT

title illustration
DAVID ROSS and **ANDREW PEPOY** with **DAVE STEWART**

UH-OH!
WHAT "UH-OH"?

THOSE TUNNELS IN THE ASTEROID! I DON'T RECALL SEEING THOSE ON THE WAY IN!
YOU'RE RIGHT, THEY'RE NOT ON THE LATEST CHARTS!
HEADHUNTERS
WE MAY BE ABLE TO AFFORD THAT VACATION AFTER ALL!

JUST IN TIME, IF YOU ASK ME. ALL YOU SEEM TO DO IS THINK ABOUT THE BUGS.
IF YOU WANT ME TO PROVE DIFFERENTLY...
...I HOPE YOU'VE PUT THE SHIP ON AUTOPILOT.
THAT'S THE LAST OF THE HYPOS, WE'LL HAVE TO RESTOCK WHEN WE HIT PORT.
I'LL LET YOU DO THAT. YOU KNOW HOW I HATE NEEDLES.

REMEMBER TO KEEP YOUR HELMET SEALED. WHATEVER ATMOSPHERE THIS PLACE HAS ISN'T FIT FOR THE LIKES OF US.
OH, I'LL REMEMBER...
...BUT I CAN'T WAIT TO TAKE IT OFF!
BUSINESS BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE, JAMES.
sigh ANYTHING YOU SAY, DEAR.

FWHSST
DAMN--!
NO BOUNTY FOR THIS! NOTHING LEFT OF THESE GUYS TO TURN IN.
PIRPPT
CARLA, IT'S ME.
HI, YOU. I FOUND THE NEST. THERE OUGHT TO BE AN ADULT AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE.

OH, THERE IS, DON'T PANIC...
... BUT I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE WATCHING YOU!
OKAY, ON THREE.
ONE...
...TWO...
FWOOSHT
SPASCH
...THREE!

THAT'S ANOTHER NOTCH ON MY BELT!
KRFFF
YOUR BELT? I WAS CLOSER TO IT, I GOT IT--
BANG!
SPWEEE
JAMES!
I'M OUT OF SHELLS!
I'VE GOT ONE! KEEP IT OCCUPIED UNTIL--

HELL.
JAMES!
CARLA, STAY BA--!
JAMES...
OH, NO...
THANK YOU...

HEADHUNTERS
FEGREDO 96

script
MIKE W. BARR

pencils
GENE COLAN

lettering
SEAN KONOT

title illustration
DUNCAN FEGREDO

REMMINGTON CORPORATION FRANCHISE PLANET #1889. RED ROCK.
PART OF A MULTIPLEX-SYSTEM OF THEME PLANETS RUN FOR THE AMUSEMENT OF WELL-TO-DO TOURISTS AND THE REVENUES OF REMMINGTON CORP.
RECENT EXCAVATIONS DONE TO SIMULATE A NEW MINING TOWN HAVE UNEARTHED AGE-OLD ARTIFACTS.
WELL, NOT REALLY ARTIFACTS.
HEAVY SLEEPERS WOULD BE MORE LIKE IT.
AND THEY'RE JUST A TAD GROUCHY.

FRAAAPPP!
HIISSSSSS?
BLAAMM
BLAAMM
BLAM
BLAM
ASSAYER
RRAAAGH!
THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE HAD VANISHED AFTER THE FIRST TWO ALIENS WERE CUT DOWN.
THEY BEGAN TO TAKE THE OFFENSE.
HISSSS
BUT IT WOULDN'T BE EASY. THEY WEREN'T DEALING WITH UNARMED TOURISTS AND MECHANICAL HORSES NOW.
WHUMP!
BLAAAM!
SNORT!

MAIN STREET. THE TOWN OF RED ROCK.
WITH THE AWAKENED ALIENS IN ATTACK FRENZY, THE TOWN HAS TRULY EARNED ITS NAME.
FOR JOHN FRIZZERA, RED ROCK WAS TO BE THE VACATION OF A LIFETIME.
HISSSSS
OH, NO... OH, NO... OH, NO...
HISSSSSS
NOW THE VACATION AND HIS LIFE ARE OVER MUCH TOO SOON.
KERSHACKKK

TOM SIRINGO HAD BEEN THROUGH A LOT IN HIS LIFE... PLENTY OF BATTLES AND SCOUT DUTY FOR REMMINGTON CORP.
BUT THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME HE HAD SEEN THE TRUE CORE OF BEAST-EVIL.
HE HAD HEARD RUMORS OF THE ALIEN-HIVE, BUT THAT'S ALL HE THOUGHT THEY WERE--RUMORS.
AWW, HELL, THEM TOURISTS AIN'T NEVER FELT A CALLUSED HAND. THOSE MONSTERS WILL TEAR 'EM APART.
THE FILTHY CREATURES HAD TO BE STOPPED.
AIN'T A FIGHTIN' MAN AMONG 'EM.
FEED STORE
CLICK!
CLICK!

IT WAS TIME FOR THE HARD RIDE.
ALIENS
TOURIST SEASON
PALACE HOT

TOM SIRINGO-- RANGE FOREMAN FOR THIS SECTION OF RED ROCK. A MAN OUT OF TIME CUT FROM A PERIOD LONG GONE. TRYING TO PRESERVE HISTORY AND DIGNITY IN AN ERA OF RICH APATHY.
MIGHTY STRANGE.
TODAY HE'S GOT TO START WORRYING ABOUT SELF-PRESERVATION.
AWW, GREAT. RANGE BASE. THIS'LL BE A GOOD ONE TO EXPLAIN.
REEEP! REEEEP!
TOM! WE NEED HELP. THEY'RE TEARING EVERYTHING APART. DOZENS OF PATRONS ARE DEAD! IT'S-- YEEAAAAHHHHH!
MORE THAN THE VOICE LINE WAS DEAD.
COME ON, FLINT. WE'RE GOIN' TO TOWN.
CLIK!
AT THAT MOMENT, TOM SIRINGO FELT SOMETHING STRANGE WITHIN HIM. IT WASN'T THE RUSH OF ADRENALINE OR THE FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN.
IT WAS MORE LIKE...
...INSTINCT.

TIME TO TAKE THE LONG NAP, UGLY.
ROCK
BLAMM BLAAMM
RREAAAGH!
UHHHHH-- NOOOOO!
HISSSSSS
GUNPOWDER, HORSE FLESH, AND ROPE. THE WAYS OF OLD MAKING AN IMPRESSION WHERE LASERS AND PLASMA BLASTS HAVE FAILED.
OOOOH!
WHHOOP
BANK OF RED ROCK
SRREEEEEE!
WHERRRK!
THERE WAS AN ODD SENSE OF JUSTICE SERVED.
D ROCK
ALOON
RESTAURANT
ENERAL STORE
SCREEEEE

HISSSSSS
NO SENSE IN BITCHIN' 'BOUT YOUR SORE THROAT.
PARLOR
AIN'T GONNA BE SORE MUCH LONGER.
KA-BLOOM!
BLOOMM!
?
SIRINGO DIDN'T GET TO SAVOR THE KILL LONG. BIGGEST AND LAST OF THE ALIENS, THE BEAST WARRIOR, LET HIS PRESENCE AND ANGER BE KNOWN.
RRRRHHHISSSS!
WHACK!
WHUUUAAGH!

RRAAIIISSSS!
WHIIIIITT!
GO TO HELL!
RRAAAGGHHHH!
CHKK!
SSSKK!
THUK!
I'LL BE DAMNED...

FOR ONCE IN HIS LIFE, TOM SIRINGO WAS GLAD HE WAS WRONG.
THE TOURISTS HAD RISEN TO THE OCCASION.
HIT IT AGAIN!
DIE, YOU MONSTER!
KILL IT!
HIS STOCK IN THE MODERN WORLD HAD TAKEN A BIG JUMP.
COAL OIL

LIKE THE CAVALRY IN ANCIENT EARTH MOVIES, THE REMMINGTON SECURITY SQUAD ARRIVES AFTER THE FACT.
HMMPH! REMMINGTON SECURITY.
TONSORIAL
DAY LATE, DOLLAR SHORT. AS USUAL.
SIRINGO, I'M DAWKINS FROM CORPORATE HQ. I UNDERSTAND YOU HAD A SITUATION. WHY DID YOU FAIL TO ACCESS SECURITY CODE 1-6?
COULD BE 'CAUSE I WAS TRYIN' TO KEEP A TOWN FULL OF TOURISTS ALIVE... DAWKINS.
YOU'VE BEEN WITH REMMINGTON LONG ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT COMPANY PROCESS IS TO BE FOLLOWED-- WITHOUT DEBATE.
DOZENS OF TOURISTS WERE LOST BECAUSE YOU WANTED TO PLAY COWBOY, SIRINGO. YOU'RE LOOKING AT HARD-TIME CHARGES!
YOU AIN'T GONNA BE LOOKIN' AT--
HOLD ON HERE, OFFICER. I'M JOHN CLUM OF THE SECTOR SENATE. TRUE, DOZENS WERE LOST HERE TODAY, BUT IF NOT FOR MR. SIRINGO, ALL WOULD BE LOST.
S-S-SENATOR CLUM??
EXCUSE ME, SENATOR CLUM, BUT YOU'RE JUST PARTIALLY RIGHT.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, SON?
I MEAN THAT EVERYBODY HERE STOOD AND DELIVERED TODAY. IT WASN'T JUST ONE MAN.
DANGER WAS BEIN' SERVED TODAY, AND EVERYBODY BELLIED UP AND HAD THEIR SHARE.
I WAS PROUD TO STAND WITH 'EM.

VERY WELL, SIRINGO.
BUT I'LL NEED YOUR OFFICIAL REPORT.
THERE'S YOUR REPORT.
BAG IT, TAG IT, AND SHOVE IT IN YOUR FILE CABINET.
AND WHILE WE'RE ON THE SUBJECT OF SHOVIN', DAWKINS...
... READ MY MIND AND GET CREATIVE.
CAFE
END

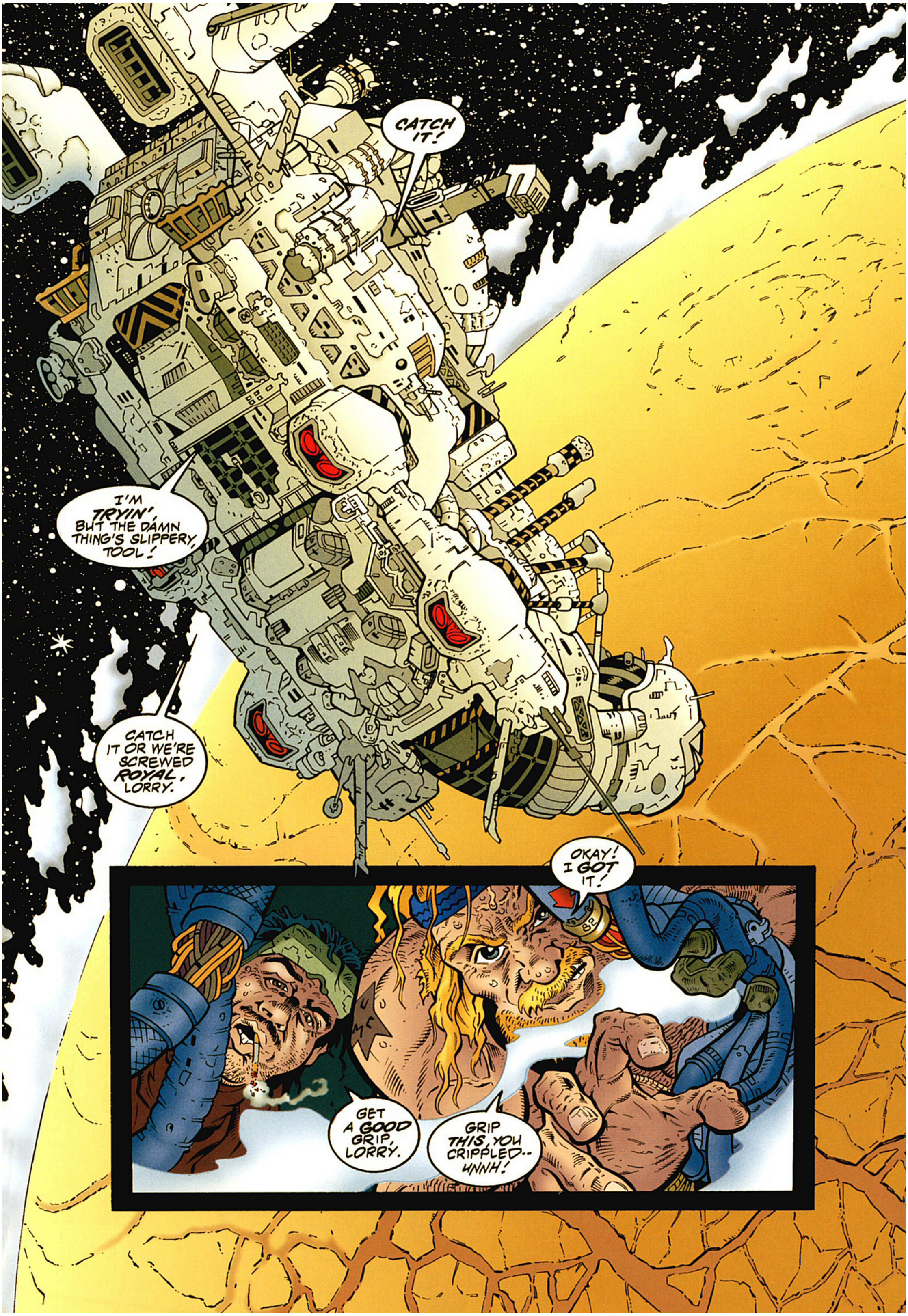
TOURIST SEASON

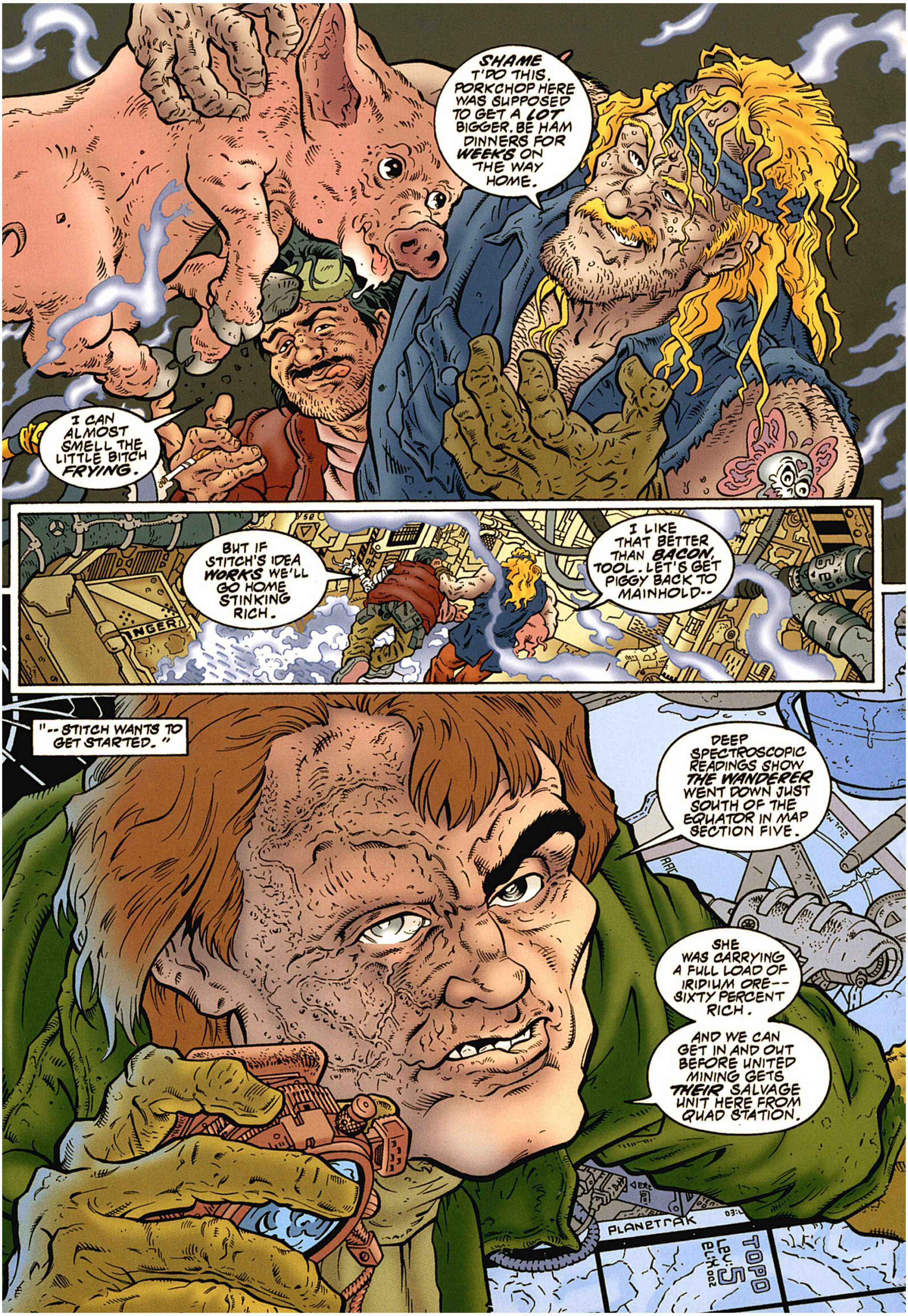
script
BEAU SMITH

art
GRAY MORROW

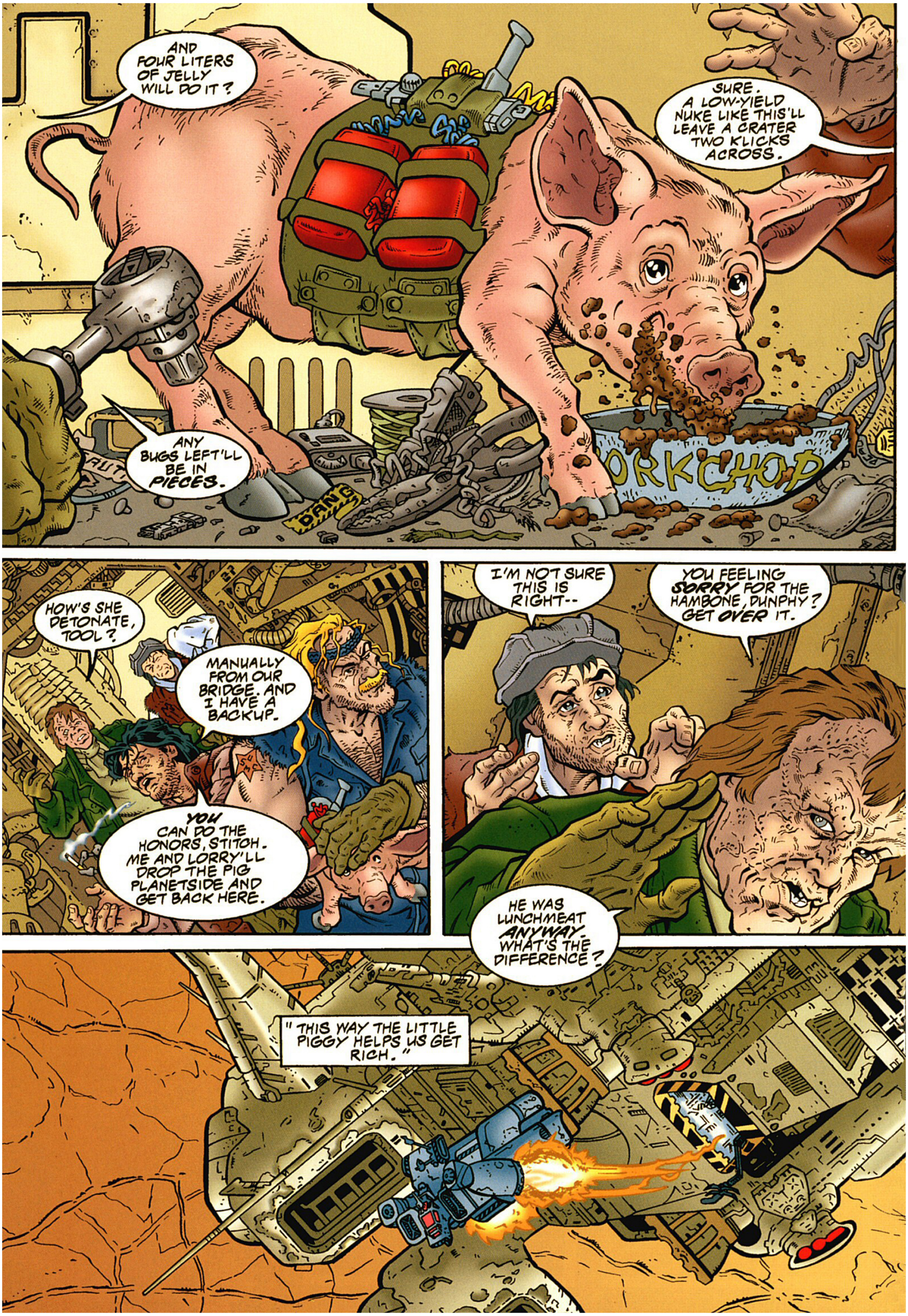
lettering
JOHN COSTANZA

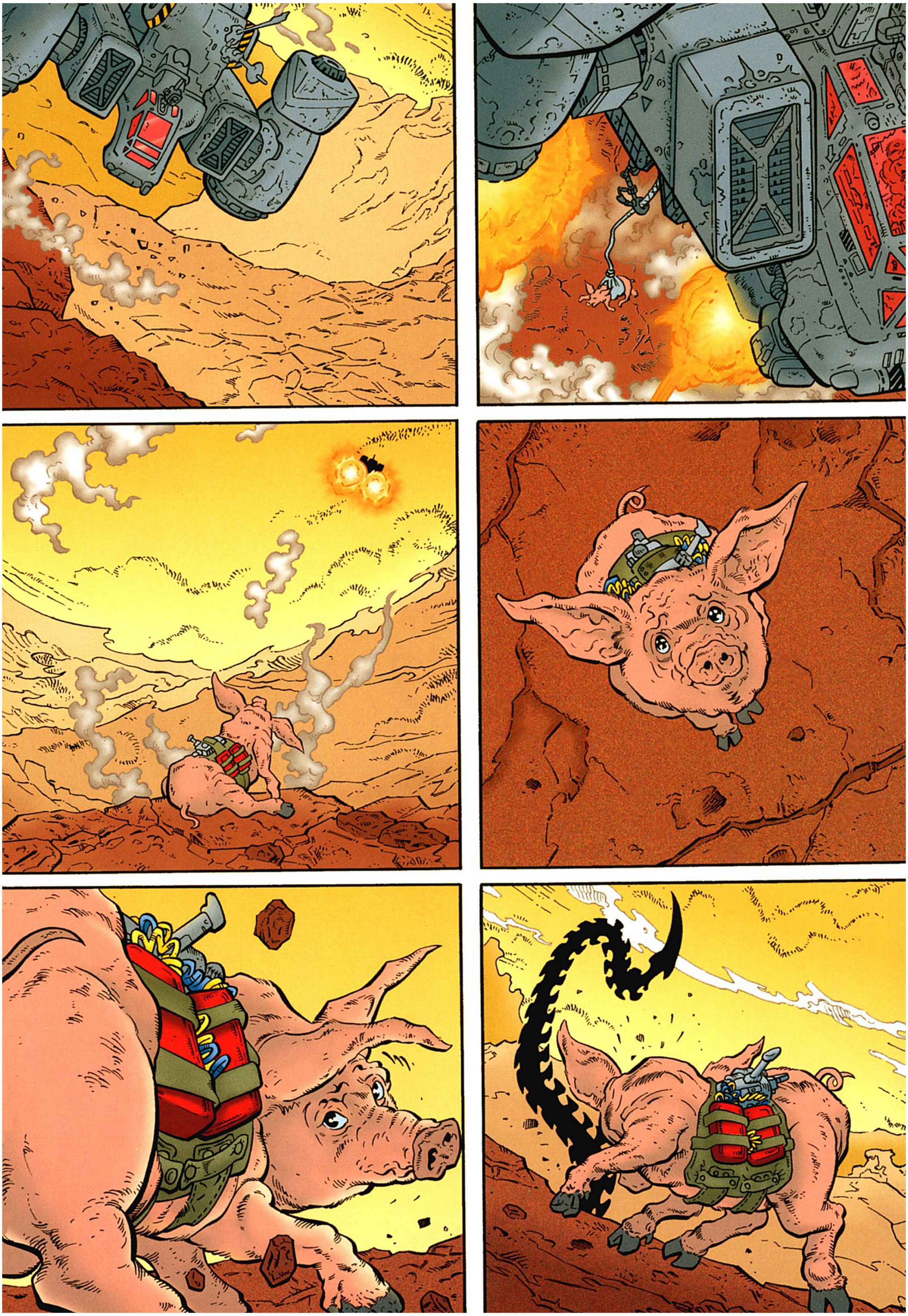
title illustration
DAVE DORMAN

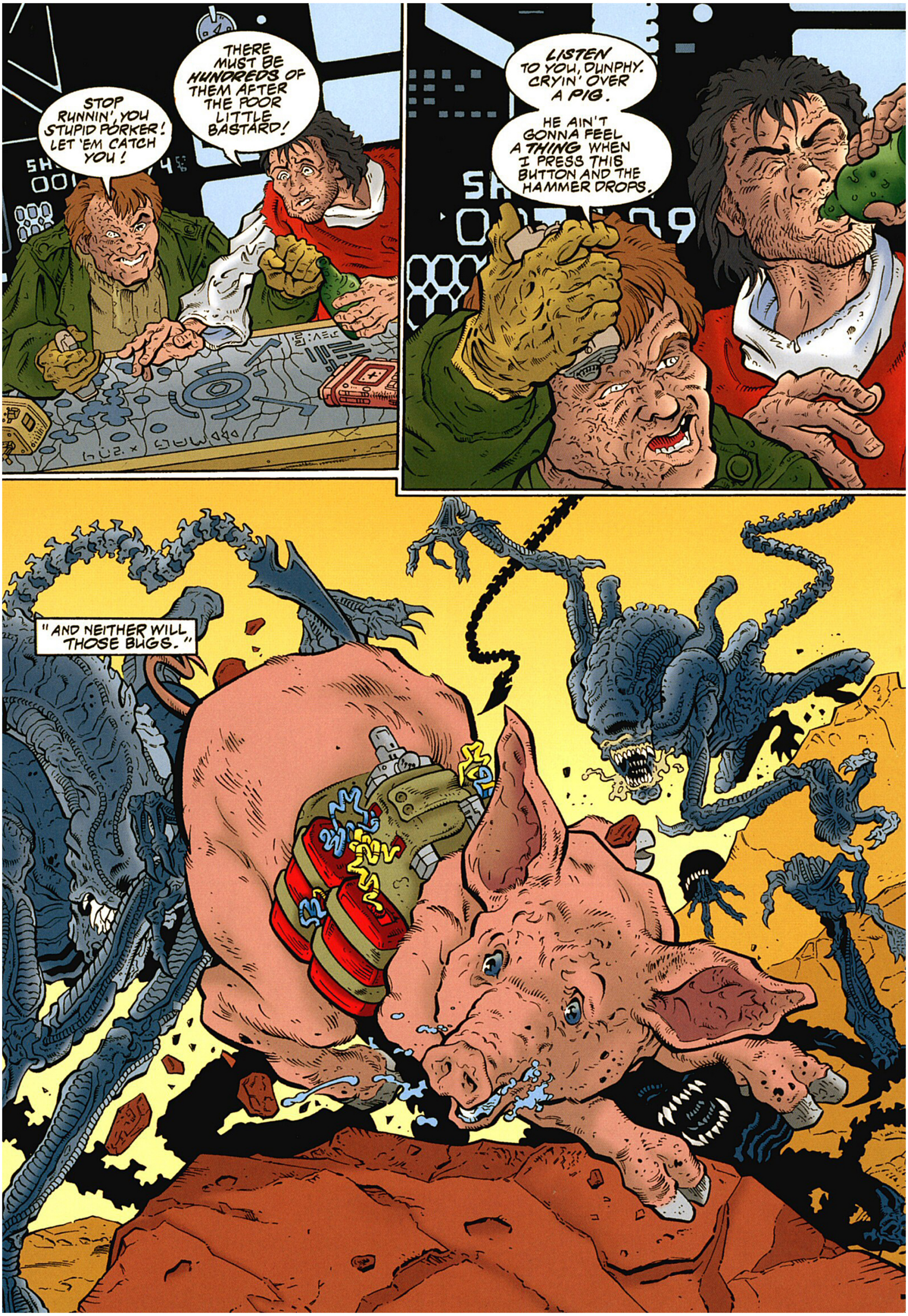

CATCH IT!
I'M TRYIN', BUT THE DAMN THING'S SLIPPERY, TOOL!
CATCH IT OR WE'RE SCREWED ROYAL, LORRY.
OKAY! I GOT IT!
GET A GOOD GRIP, LORRY.
GRIP THIS, YOU CRIPPLED-- UNNH!


SHAME T'DO THIS. PORKCHOP HERE WAS SUPPOSED TO GET A LOT BIGGER. BE HAM DINNERS FOR WEEKS ON THE WAY HOME.
I CAN ALMOST SMELL THE LITTLE BITCH FRYING.
BUT IF STITCH'S IDEA WORKS WE'LL GO HOME STINKING RICH.
I LIKE THAT BETTER THAN BACON, TOOL. LET'S GET PIGGY BACK TO MAINHOLD--
"--STITCH WANTS TO GET STARTED."
DEEP SPECTROSCOPIC READINGS SHOW THE WANDERER WENT DOWN JUST SOUTH OF THE EQUATOR IN MAP SECTION FIVE.
SHE WAS CARRYING A FULL LOAD OF IRIDIUM ORE-- SIXTY PERCENT RICH.
AND WE CAN GET IN AND OUT BEFORE UNITED MINING GETS THEIR SALVAGE UNIT HERE FROM QUAD STATION.
PLANETRAK
TOPO
5

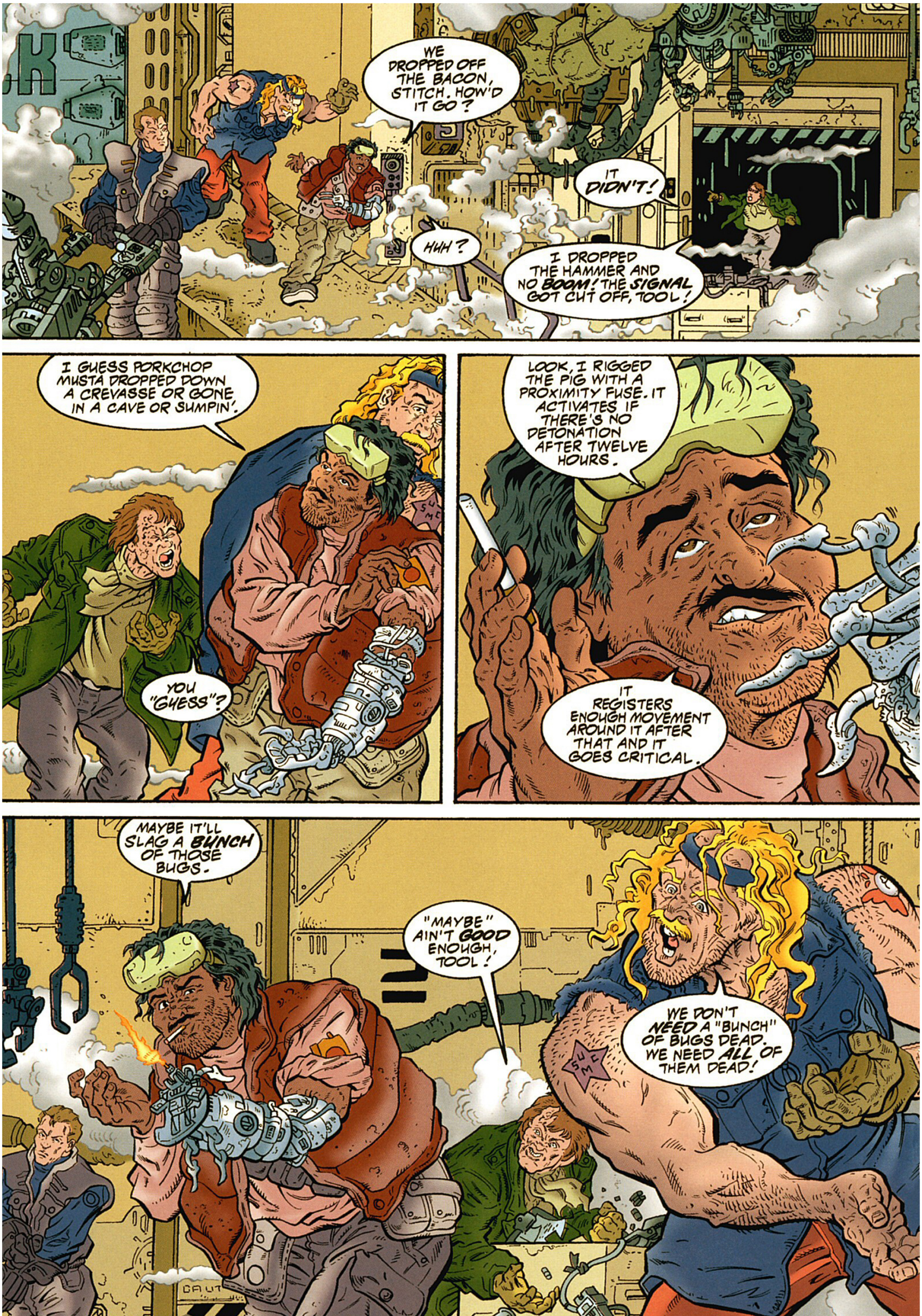
CLOSE
THAT'S WORTH AT LEAST SEVENTY MILLION.
RACKS IS RIGHT. LET'S GET TO WORK.
IT'S NOT GOING TO BE THAT EASY. THERE'S A COMPLI-CATION.
BUT I THINK WE CAN FINESSE IT.
THERMOSCANS AND BIO-MATCH SHOW THE CRASH SITE IS A BUG HIVE.
BUGS?
YOU SURE, STITCH?
NOBODY SAID ANYTHING ABOUT BUGS.
THAT'S WHERE PORKCHOP COMES IN.


AND FOUR LITERS OF JELLY WILL DO IT?
SURE. A LOW-YIELD NUKE LIKE THIS'LL LEAVE A CRATER TWO KLICKS ACROSS.
ANY BUGS LEFT'LL BE IN PIECES.
PORKCHOP
HOW'S SHE DETONATE, TOOL?
MANUALLY FROM OUR BRIDGE. AND I HAVE A BACKUP.
YOU CAN DO THE HONORS, STITCH. ME AND LORRY'LL DROP THE PIG PLANETSIDE AND GET BACK HERE.
I'M NOT SURE THIS IS RIGHT--
YOU FEELING SORRY FOR THE HAMBONE, DUNPHY? GET OVER IT.
HE WAS LUNCHMEAT ANYWAY. WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?
"THIS WAY THE LITTLE PIGGY HELPS US GET RICH."



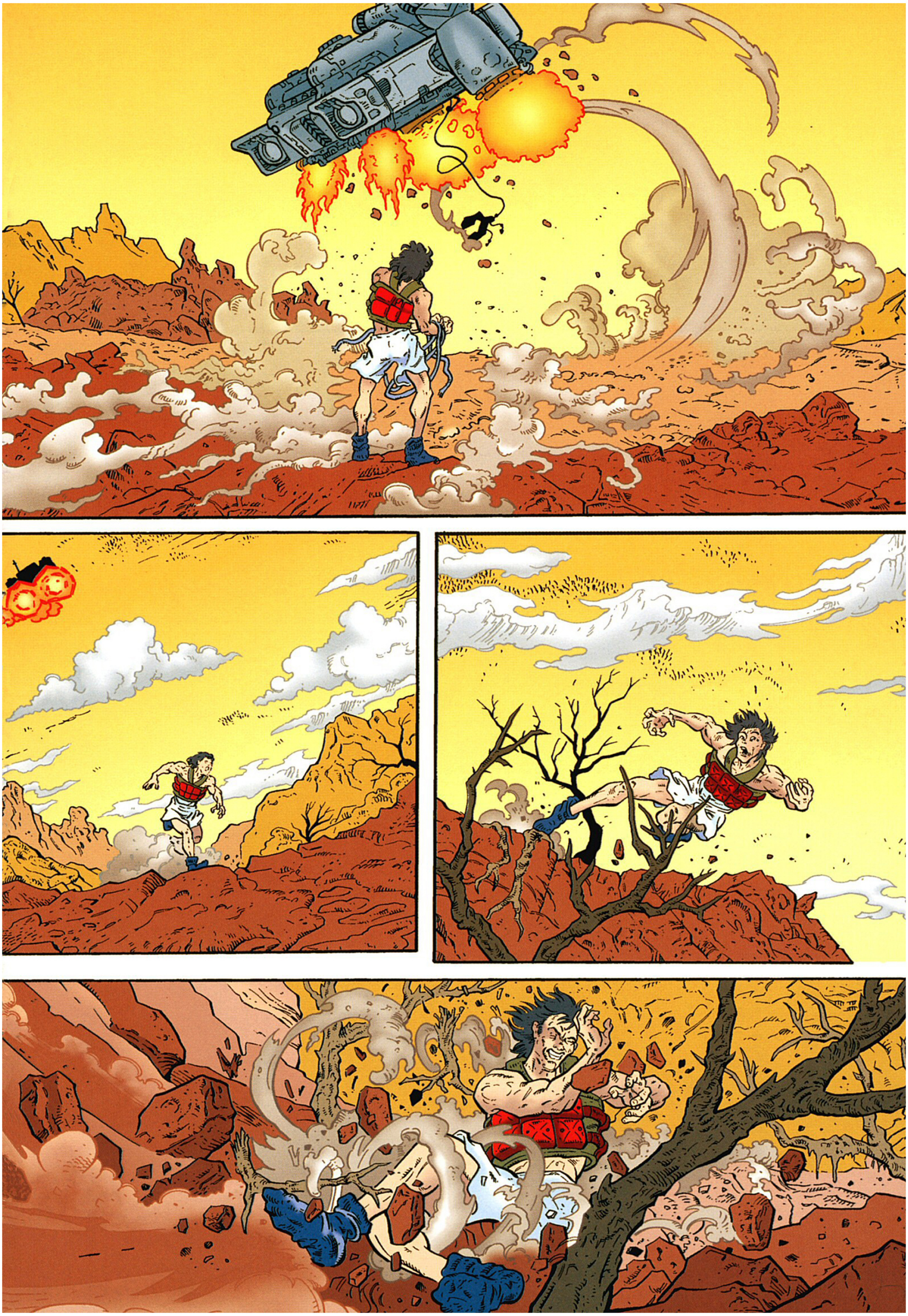

STOP RUNNIN', YOU STUPID PORKER! LET 'EM CATCH YOU!
THERE MUST BE HUNDREDS OF THEM AFTER THE POOR LITTLE BASTARD!
LISTEN TO YOU, DUNPHY. CRYIN' OVER A PIG.
HE AIN'T GONNA FEEL A THING WHEN I PRESS THIS BUTTON AND THE HAMMER DROPS.
"AND NEITHER WILL THOSE BUGS."

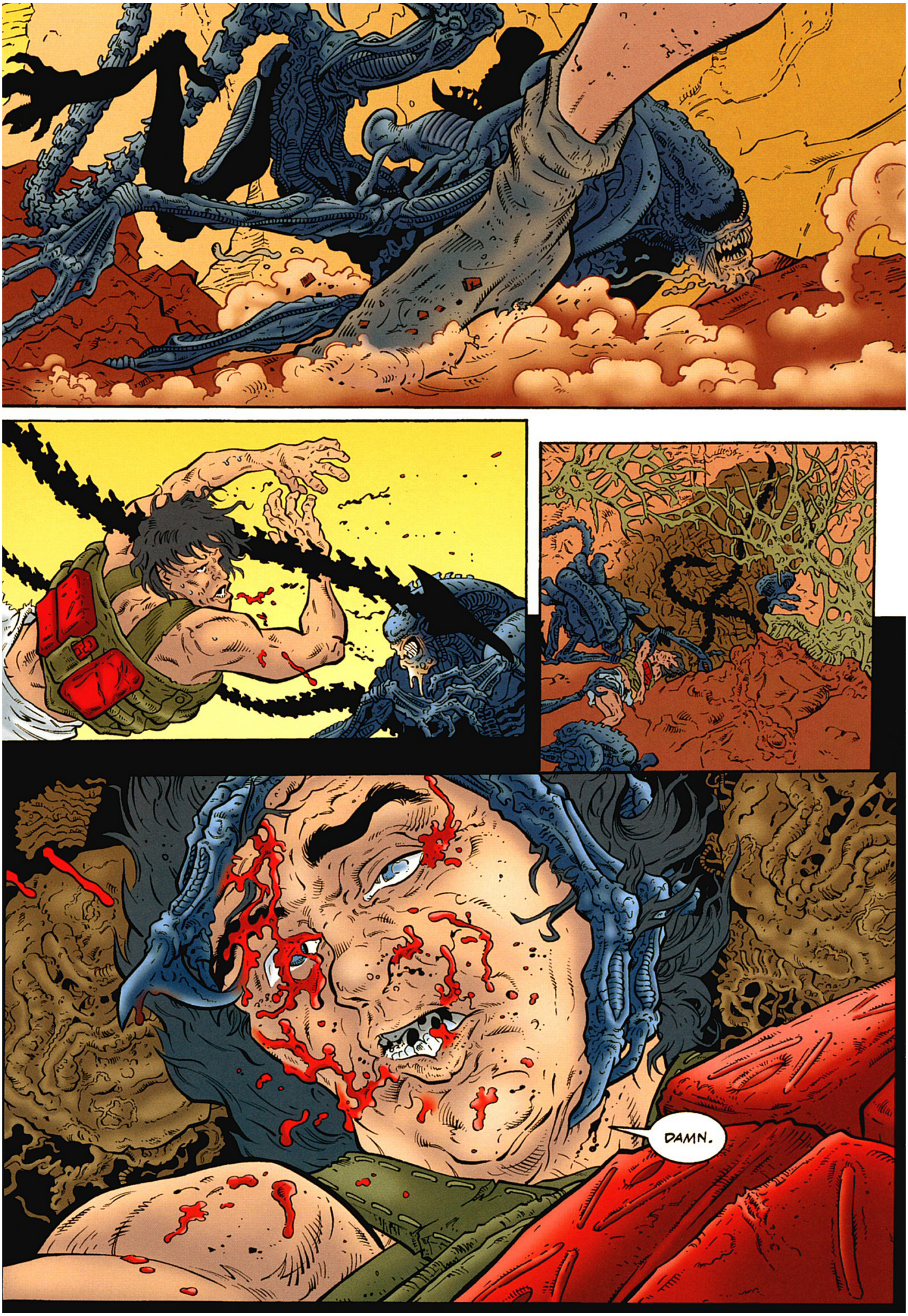
THAT'S IT... THAT'S IT...
FOLLOW THE BACON INTO THE FRYER, YOU...
primed!
DET: armed
FIRE
ARM
DON'T WANT TO MISS ONE OF YOU MO-FUGLY--
KLIK
YEAH!
NO!
WHAT IS IT, STITCH?
IT DIDN'T DETONATE!
THE DAMN THING DIDN'T GO OFF!
HAHAHA!
LOCK
KLIK KLIK
KLIK KLIK
CAUTION

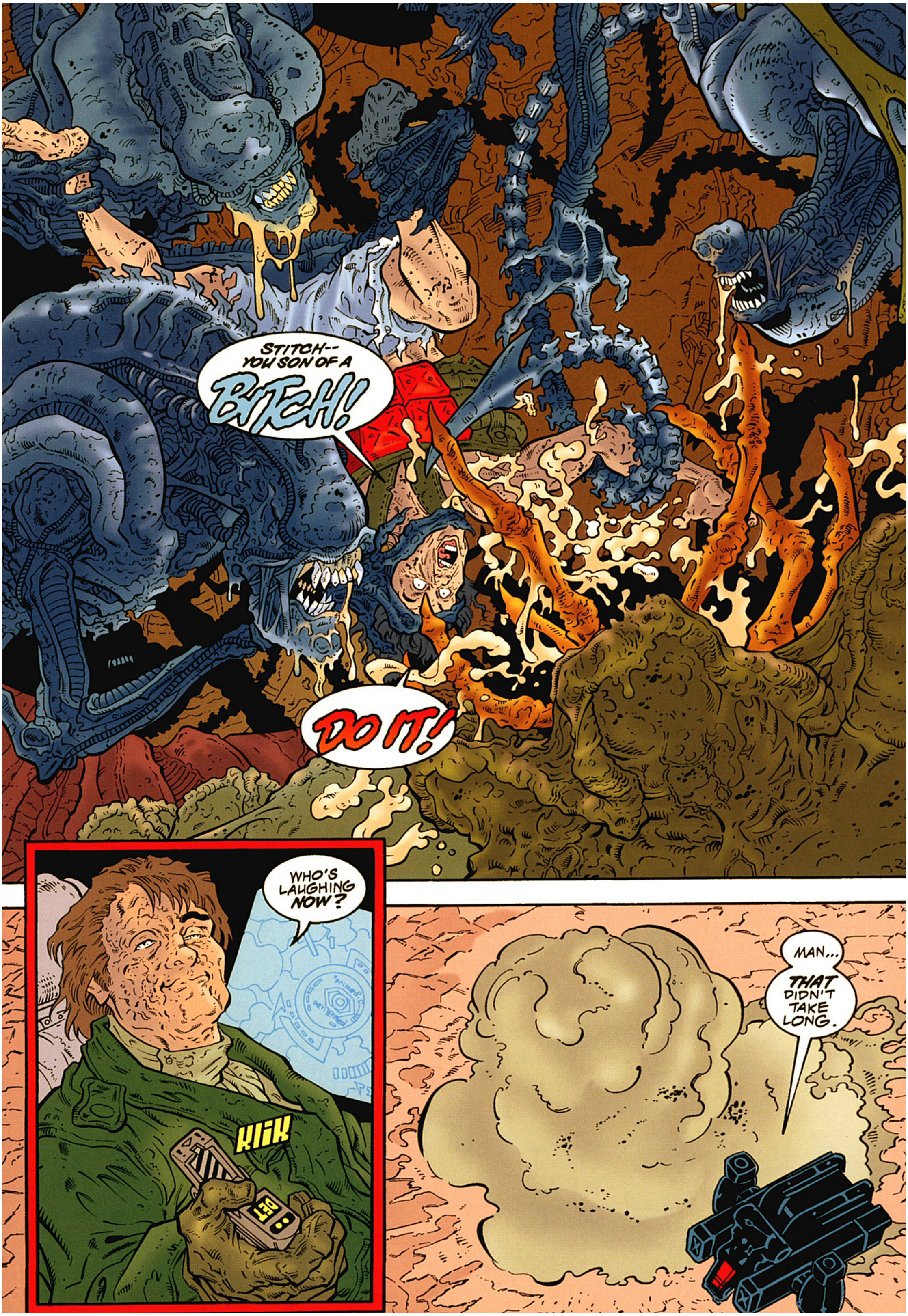

WE DROPPED OFF THE BACON, STITCH. HOW'D IT GO?
IT DIDN'T!
HUH?
I DROPPED THE HAMMER AND NO BOOM! THE SIGNAL GOT CUT OFF, TOOL!
I GUESS PORKCHOP MUSTA DROPPED DOWN A CREVASSE OR GONE IN A CAVE OR SUMPIN'.
YOU "GUESS"?
LOOK, I RIGGED THE PIG WITH A PROXIMITY FUSE. IT ACTIVATES IF THERE'S NO DETONATION AFTER TWELVE HOURS.
IT REGISTERS ENOUGH MOVEMENT AROUND IT AFTER THAT AND IT GOES CRITICAL.
MAYBE IT'LL SLAG A BUNCH OF THOSE BUGS.
"MAYBE" AIN'T GOOD ENOUGH, TOOL!
WE DON'T NEED A "BUNCH" OF BUGS DEAD. WE NEED ALL OF THEM DEAD!

LOOK AT YOU!
PORKED BY A PORKER!
HAHA HAHAHA HAHA!
I'M GRABBING SOME SLEEP.
YOU BRAINS COME UP WITH ANOTHER BRILLIANT PLAN, YOU CAN TELL ME ABOUT IT WHEN I WAKE UP.
HEE HEE HEE!
CAN YOU RIG SOME MORE JELLY, TOOL?
SURE, STITCH, BUT WE'RE FRESH OUT OF PIGS.
YOU WORRY ABOUT THE NUKES, TOOLMAN.
I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE REST.

DAMN!
SHH!
WHHZZAT? SOMEBODY THERE?
STITCH! WHAT'S THIS ALL--
NOW'S YOUR CHANCE TO BE A TEAM PLAYER, DUNPHY.
TEAM--?
YOU GET TO BE "PLAN B"!
THIS WON'T WORK, GUYS!
THERE'S GOT TO BE ANOTHER WAY!
SEVENTY MIL'S A LOT OF JACK. ESPECIALLY SPLIT FOUR WAYS!
'SIDES, THIS WAY YOU GET TO BE REUNITED WITH YOUR PIG!

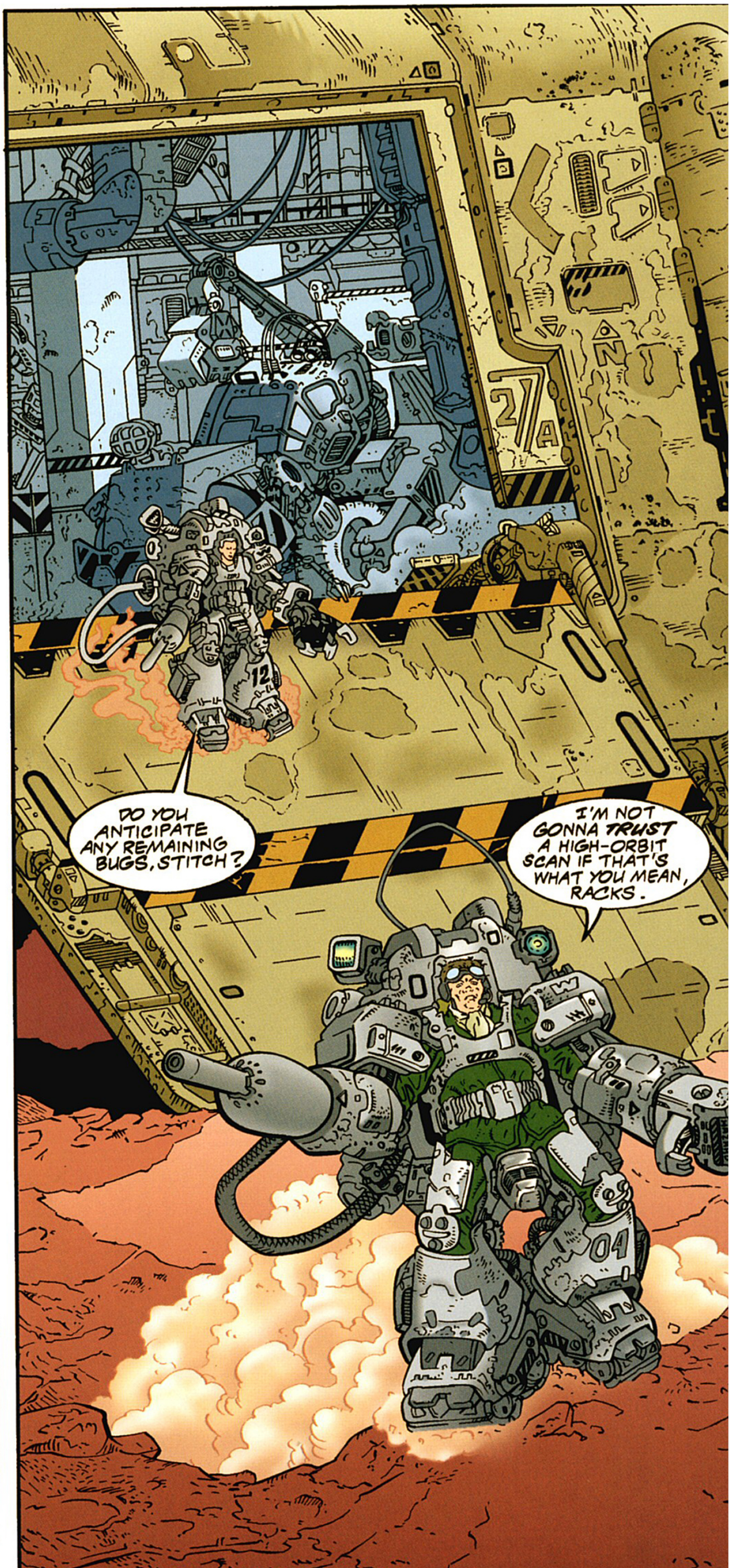


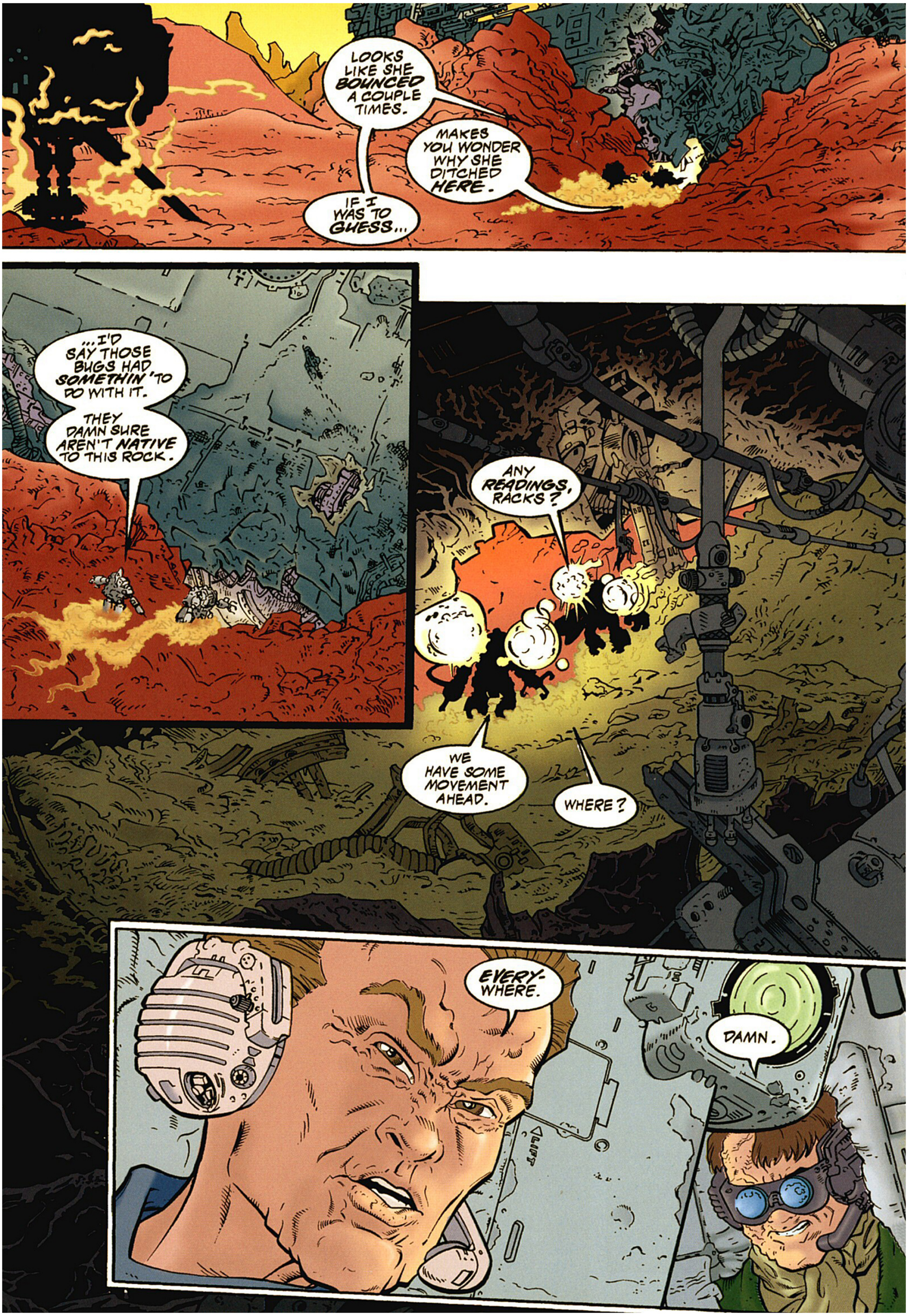

DAMN.


STITCH--
YOU SON OF A
BITCH!
DO IT!
WHO'S LAUGHING NOW?
KLIK
MAN...
THAT DIDN'T TAKE LONG.

GOT THE CRASH SITE OF THE WANDERER ZEROED, STITCH.
SET US DOWN ON THE OTHER SIDE OF IT--AWAY FROM THE BLAST POINT.
WE DON'T NEED TO SOAK UP ANY EXTRA RADS.

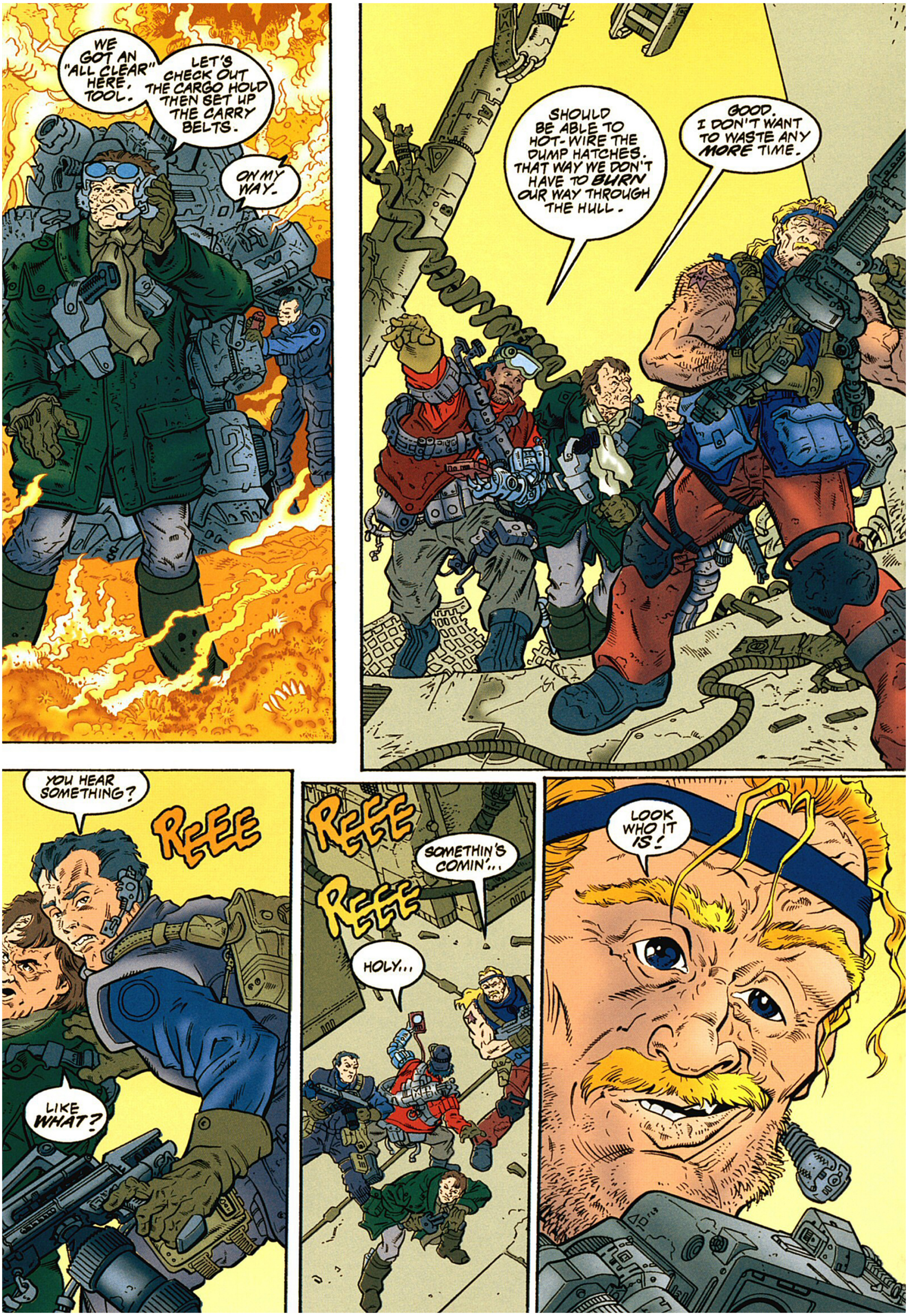
RACKS AND I WILL SCOUT AHEAD.
YOU AND LORRY GET THE MATTER CANNON SET UP.
I WANT TO LAUNCH THIS LOAD INTO LOW ORBIT AND SCOOP IT BEFORE UNITED GETS INTO THIS QUADRANT.


DO YOU ANTICIPATE ANY REMAINING BUGS, STITCH?
I'M NOT GONNA TRUST A HIGH-ORBIT SCAN IF THAT'S WHAT YOU MEAN, RACKS.



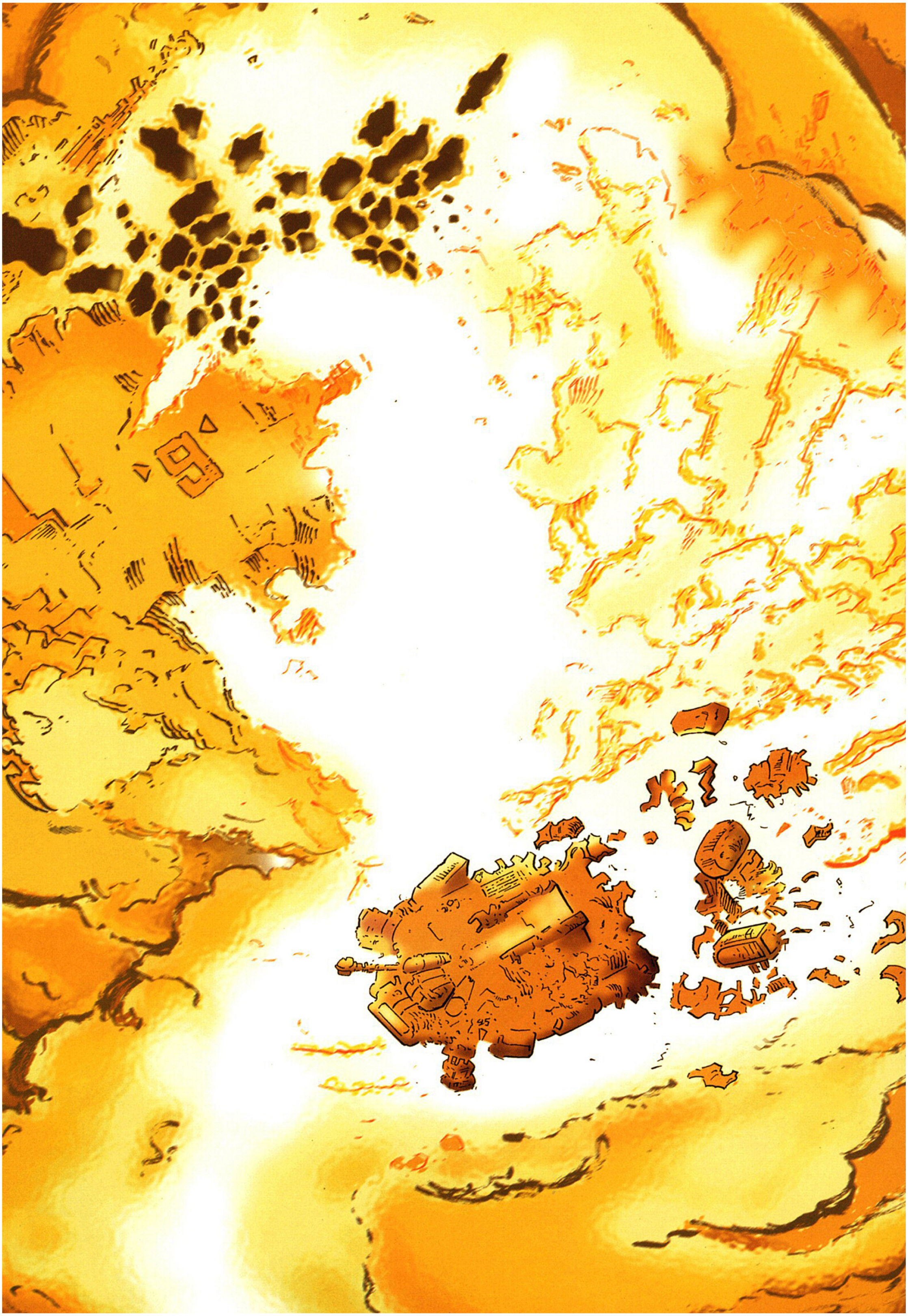
LOOKS LIKE SHE BOUNCED A COUPLE TIMES.
MAKES YOU WONDER WHY SHE DITCHED HERE.
IF I WAS TO GUESS...
...I'D SAY THOSE BUGS HAD SOMETHIN' TO DO WITH IT.
THEY DAMN SURE AREN'T NATIVE TO THIS ROCK.
ANY READINGS, RACKS?
WE HAVE SOME MOVEMENT AHEAD.
WHERE?
EVERY-WHERE.
DAMN.

UH... STITCH...
FRY 'EM ALL!



WE GOT AN "ALL CLEAR" HERE, TOOL.
LET'S CHECK OUT THE CARGO HOLD THEN SET UP THE CARRY BELTS.
ON MY WAY.
SHOULD BE ABLE TO HOT-WIRE THE DUMP HATCHES. THAT WAY WE DON'T HAVE TO BURN OUR WAY THROUGH THE HULL.
GOOD. I DON'T WANT TO WASTE ANY MORE TIME.
YOU HEAR SOMETHING?
REEE
LIKE WHAT?
REEE
SOMETHIN'S COMIN'...
REEE
HOLY...
LOOK WHO IT IS!

REE!
IT'S PORKCHOP!
WHAT'D YOU SAY BEFORE ABOUT A PROXIMITY FUSE?
THE OINKER'D BLOW IF ANY LIFE READINGS GOT CLOSE.
HOW CLOSE?
THIS CLOSE!
DEET
DEET
DEET
DEET
AW--



PIG

script
CHUCK DIXON

pencils
FLINT HENRY

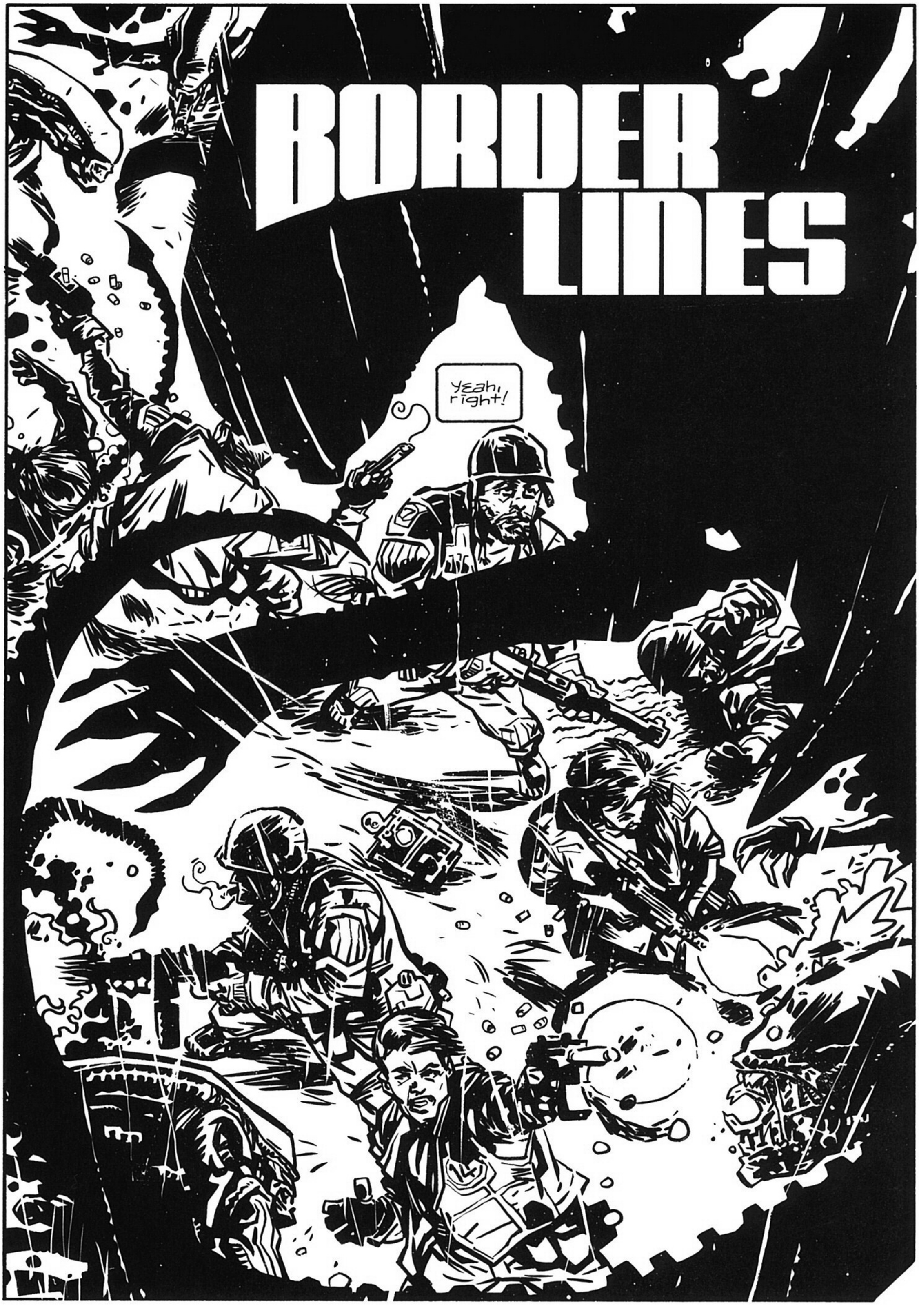
inks
ANDREW PEPOY

colors
CARY PORTER

lettering
STEVE DUTRO

title illustration
CHRIS SCALF

Guarding the border on O'Bannon's World during the famine sucked. That's why I volunteered for colonization.
SO, GARCIA AND ME ARE ON GUARD DUTY, OKAY? AND HE'S TELLING ME HOW THE BUGS GOT HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW--
What can I lose, I figured. My home colony's over-crowded, anyway. Too much hatred...
--HE SOUNDS KINDA FUNNY, Y'KNOW. KINDA GUILTY. I SAY NOTHING, BUT THEN A BUG JUMPS IN FRONT OF US--
...And there's enough space in space, I figured. Enough fields, enough food...
--AND GARCIA--GET A LOAD OF THIS--HE FALLS TO HIS KNEES AND CRIES: "IT'S HER! SHE CAME FOR ME!" I, OF COURSE--
BWEEP
And I wouldn't have to fight off hungry aliens there, RIGHT?
OH, CRAP!
THEY'RE COMING!
BWEEP
BWEEP
BWEEP


BORDER LINES
Yeah, right!

BRANKO, WE'RE TRAPPED!
RUBBISH!
WE HAVE THEM IN THE OPEN HERE!
THEY CAN'T SNEAK UP ON US!

WHACK!
UNH--
PLOUNK
GET READY, BRANKO!
ARE THEY COMING, CAPTAIN? HOW CAN YOU TELL?
I'VE BEEN A RANGER TOO LONG. I CAN HEAR A RUMBLING OF DESPERATE STOMACHS FROM MILES OFF!

I DON'T UNDERSTAND THIS, CAPTAIN.
IT'S THEM OR US, BOY! THEIR HUNGER OF TODAY OR OURS OF TOMORROW!
I KNOW THE ORDERS, SIR! BUT...WHY DO THEY KEEP TRYING? THEY DON'T HAVE A PRAYER!
THEY DON'T IF THEY STAY THERE. OVER HERE--WHO KNOWS?
SOME GUN MAY JAM, SOME ROOKIE MAY NOT PULL THE TRIGGER ...SO THEY HOPE.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
YES, CAPTAIN!
I said I did, but I didn't.
Not then.
SHOULD I FIRE, CAPTAIN?
NOT YET--

"--Let the river claim its due!"
HACK! SPUT!
Jungle.
This was the thought that got me to the top.
To get out of the canyon, to reach the jungle...
Once in the jungle, though, the other thought came--
--BUGS!

Bugs!
sSsSSsSs
Bugs!
BUGS!
BUGS!
HHAHHH
STOP OR I'LL SHOOT!

STAY WHERE YOU ARE, BRANKO! YOU WERE GONE FOR TWO DAYS! I BET YOU'RE CARRYING A BUG!
DON'T SHOOT, HENRY! IT'S ME!
I'M NOT! C'MON! I'D KNOW IT!
Two days?! No way he's gonna believe me!
YOU WOULD SAY THAT, WOULDN'T YOU?! STAY AWAY!
He's known me for years. He WON'T shoot.
I'LL HAVE TO SHOOT IF YOU MOVE! YOU KNOW THE ORDERS!
The circuitry is sensitive in his gun. All this rain might've fused it...
...It's worth a try. I may stand a chance--
DO YOU UNDER-STAND WHAT I'M SAYING, BRANKO?
YES.
Yes, Captain. now I under-stand.
THE END

BORDER LINES

script
DARKO MACAN

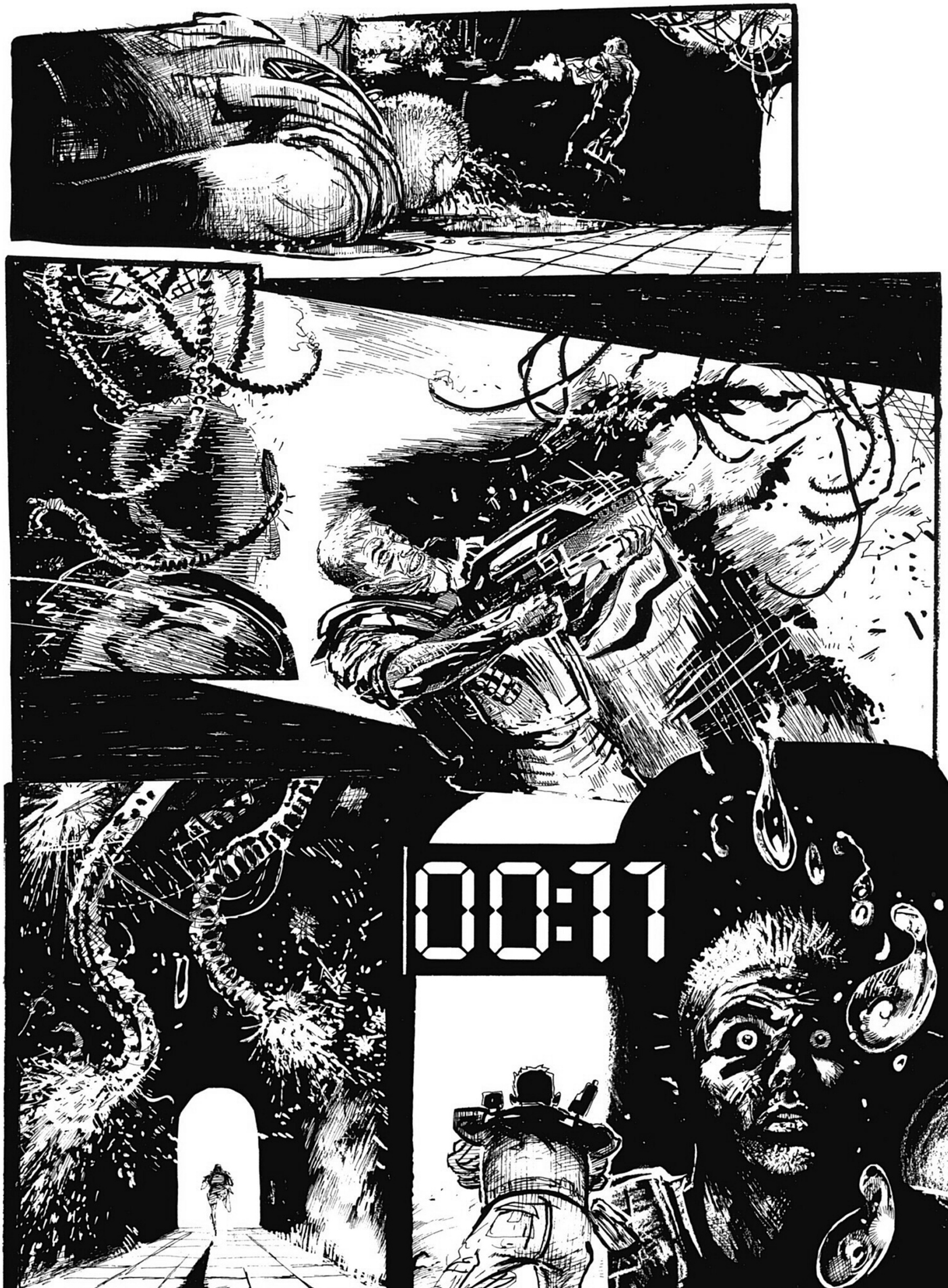
art
TOMMY LEE EDWARDS

lettering
JOHN WORKMAN

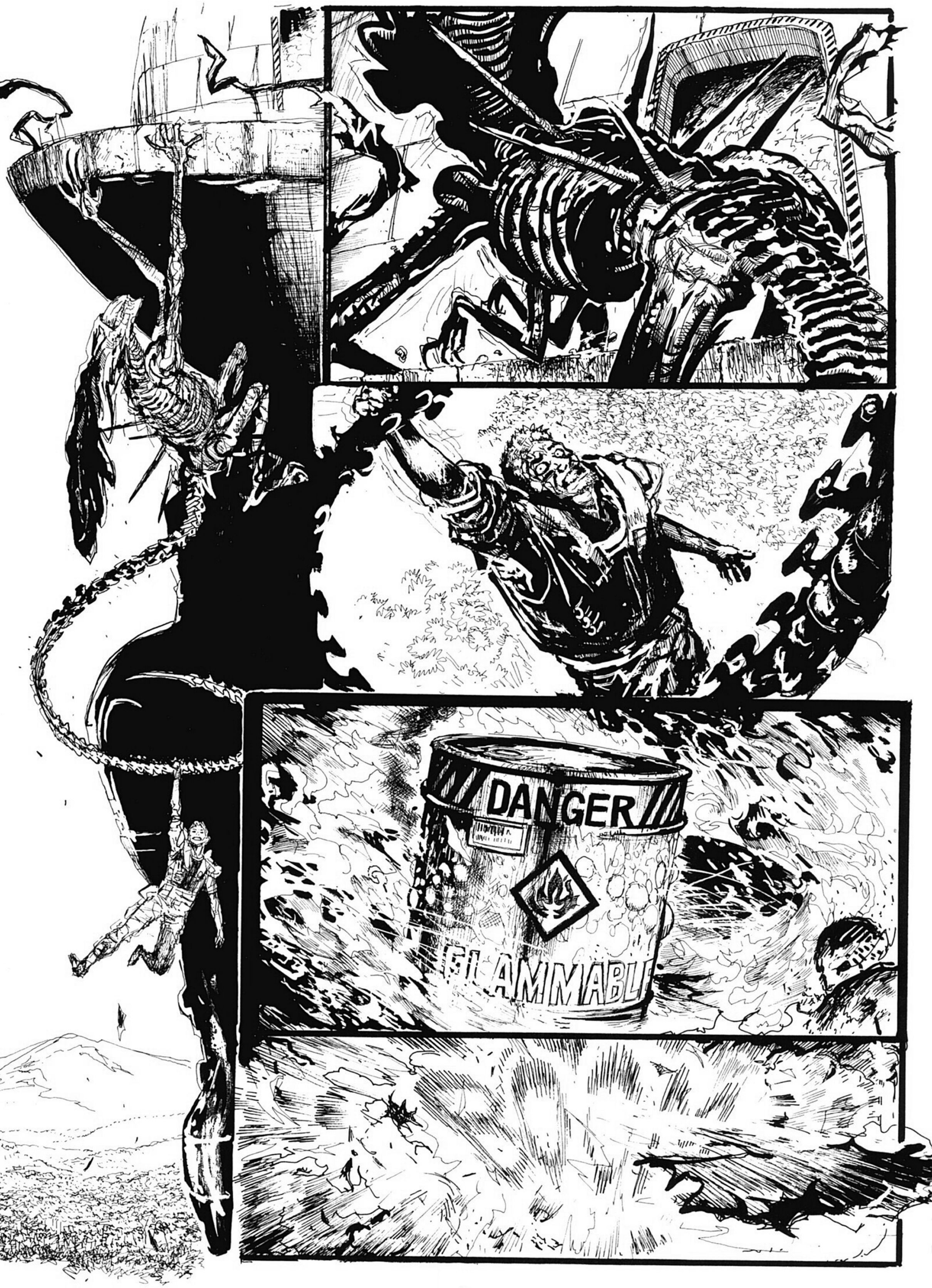
title illustration
JOHN BOLTON

00:45
BLEEP

ANGER
0:32


00:11

00:09
00:07
00:05
00:03
CLICK
CLICK
00:02
00:01


DANGER
FLAMMABL

00:45
FIN

45 SECONDS

script
DARKO MACAN

art
FRANK TERAN

title illustration
FRANK TERAN with **JON FELL** and **CHRIS HORN**

THIS IS THE STORY OF A MYSTERY YET TO BE SOLVED. IT BEGAN IN THE FINAL YEAR OF THE 21ST CENTURY.
THE INHABITANTS OF EARTH HAD BEEN VOYAGING TO THE STARS IN SEARCH OF FRESH RESOURCES FOR THEIR POLLUTED AND OVERCROWDED HOMEWORLD FOR OVER SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS.
elder gods
THE OMNI-TECH COLONY ON MIRA CETI 4 WAS ONE SUCH VENTURE.
FOR OVER FIFTEEN YEARS, A SUCCESSION OF OMNITECHS AND CIVILIAN RECRUITS TOILED TO SHAPE MIRA CETI'S ARID SURFACE.
IN ITS ANNUAL STOCKHOLDERS' REPORT, OMNITECH CLAIMED THAT THE COLONY'S SUCCESS RESTED ON THE UNIQUE COMBINATION OF SKILLED PROFESSIONALS AND HIGHLY MOTIVATED CIVILIAN "PIONEERS."
THEN AGAIN, WHAT THE STOCKHOLDERS DIDN'T KNOW COULDN'T HURT THE COMPANY...
THAT'S IT!
I'M THROUGH TALKING TO THOSE LUNATICS--!

THE ESOTERICS AGAIN?
WHO ELSE? THEY'RE STILL REFUSING THE WORK ASSIGNMENT!
WHAT IS IT THIS TIME?
THEY CLAIM OMNITECH IS DELIBERATELY "DEMEANING" THEM!
"WHAT A LOAD OF SELF-SERVING CRAP! YOU DON'T HEAR THE LATTER-DAY SATANISTS OR THE PRESLEYANS COMPLAINING, DO YOU?
"THEIR LEADER INSISTS THAT SINCE MY POSITION AS FOREMAN IS SECULAR, I HAVE NO RIGHT TO DETERMINE HIS GROUP'S ACTIVITIES!"
YOU DID THE RIGHT THING BRINGING THIS TO MY ATTENTION. I'LL HANDLE IT.
MAVIS--TELL FATHER LUMLEY I WANT TO SEE HIM IN MY OFFICE *IMMEDIATELY*.
RIGHT AWAY, CHIEF!
FINDING MEN AND WOMEN WILLING TO LEAVE EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE THEY'D EVER KNOWN FOR A LIFETIME OF HARD WORK AND AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE IS NOT EASY. SO OMNITECH WAS FORCED TO TAKE WHAT THEY COULD GET IN THE WAY OF RECRUITS--USUALLY POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS SOME COULD KINDLY CALL "ALTERNATIVE," AND OTHERS, MORE BLUNTLY, "CRACKPOT."
WHICH IS HOW THE ESOTERIC BROTHERHOOD OF TULITU, A MYSTIC SECT THAT CLAIMED THE MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY HORROR WRITER HORACE PAYNE LOVELESS AS THEIR PROPHET, ENDED UP ON MIRA CETI 4.

OKAY, GIRL, YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO--NAIL THIS JERK FAST AND HARD! AND DON'T LET HIM GIVE YOU ANY BACK TALK!
YOU WISHED TO SPEAK WITH ME, CHIEF ARCHITECT?
HPL
NOT REALLY--BUT IT LOOKS LIKE I DON'T HAVE A CHOICE. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF YOUR REFUSAL OF THE COLONY FOREMAN'S WORK ASSIGNMENT?
QUARRY DETAIL IS MENIAL LABOR! SUCH A LOWLY ASSIGNMENT IS AN AFFRONT TO MY PEOPLE! THIS IS RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION--!
DON'T HAND ME THAT BULLSHIT! YOUR GROUP SIGNED A CONTRACT THAT THEY WOULD OBSERVE COMPANY RULES AND ABIDE UNDER OMNITECH'S ADMINISTRATION FOR 75 YEARS! SHOULD YOU CONTINUE TO UNDERMINE COMPANY AUTHORITY, I WILL BE FORCED TO EXPEL YOUR ENCLAVE FROM THE COMPOUND! HAVE I MADE MYSELF CLEAR, FATHER LUMLEY?
Y-YES, MA'AM.
GOOD! I HATE HAVING TO REPEAT MYSELF. YOUR EQUIPMENT AND TRANSPORTATION TO THE EXCAVATION SITE WILL BE READY AND WAITING IN THE GARAGE BAY AT 0600 HOURS. GOOD DAY, FATHER.
GOOD DAY, CHIEF ARCHITECT.

The indignity of it all!
To be sent into the wilderness to sweat and toil at the command of a heathen bitch! We who are heir to the secrets of They Who Stride Between The Stars, treated as stoop labor! They will pay dearly for this affront.
MASTER OF THE STAR-OCEAN! YOU WHO LIE DREAMING IN THE LOST CITY OF R'LEK, HEAR THESE, THE PRAYERS OF YOUR HUMBLEST OF SERVANTS! AID US IN THIS, OUR TIME OF NEED, AGAINST THOSE WHO WOULD PERSECUTE US, YOUR CHILDREN! HELP US TO SMITE THINE ENEMIES, O TULITU! GRANT US THE POWER TO TURN THEIR EYES TO JELLY AND FILL THEIR LUNGS WITH BLOOD!
When I inherited the mantle of High Priest from Father August, he warned me that ours would be a thorny path. Others sense our power and fear us. And rightly so, for when the stars are right, and the Elder Gods awaken from their eons-long slumber, there will be death and destruction as never before loosed upon the sons of Adam...
O GREAT AND MIGHTY TULITU! LORD OF THE GREAT VOID!
And when the mightiest of the sleeping Elders, great Tulitu, is reborn into the mortal world, we shall be his will made flesh! And then the unbelievers will pay for their blasphemy -- on this world -- and beyond!
AT LEAST THEY'RE OUT OF OUR HAIR FOR NINETY DAYS!
K546
YEAH, THESE GUYS MAKE THE PARTRIDGE-FAMILY TEMPLE LOOK LIKE *METHODISTS*.
HPL
WE'LL ALL REST EASIER KNOWING THE ESOTERICS ARE OFF BREAKING ROCKS.

Day 23: There is nothing to do but labor from dawn to dusk in the quarry, feeding rocks to the mineral extractor for shipment back to Earth.
Despite my best efforts, it is impossible to keep the sand out of my tent, equipment, and rations.
I don't know what chafes the worst: the ever-present grit, or the insolence of OmniTech's lapdogs. Not that the other so-called pioneers are any different. The day will soon come when they shall all regret trifling with me --
FATHER LUMLEY! COME QUICK!
WHAT IS IT, BROTHER RAMSEY?
I'M NOT SURE-- BUT I THINK YOU NEED TO SEE THIS! BROTHER COLIN UNCOVERED IT WITH HIS SAND-BLOWER!
WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF IT, YOUR EMINENCE?
IT FEELS LIKE SOME KIND OF METAL, DON'T YOU AGREE?
I WANT THIS THING UNCOVERED AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE!
BROTHER ASHTON, YOU WILL HELP BROTHER COLIN WITH THE SAND-BLOWERS! BROTHER CLARK, YOU WILL GO WITH BROTHER RAMSEY AND ALERT THE OTHERS! EVERYONE IS TO WORK ON THIS DAY AND NIGHT, IS THAT UNDERSTOOD?
YES, FATHER!
WHAT DO YOU THINK IT IS, YOUR HOLINESS?
I'M NOT SURE, BROTHER RAMSEY--I MUST GO AND MEDITATE. DO NOT DISTURB ME UNTIL THE OBJECT HAS BEEN UNEARTHED.
BUT WHAT SHALL WE TELL THE OMNITECHS?
TELL THEM NOTHING! UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES ARE THOSE HEATHENS TO KNOW WHAT WE'RE DOING!

Day 32:
Y-YOUR GRACE?
IS IT DONE, BROTHER ASHTON?
IT IS DONE.
YOU TREMBLE, MY FRIEND. ARE YOU FRIGHTENED?
Y-YES, FATHER.
EXCELLENT! THEN MY VISIONS WERE TRUE.
VISIONS?
IN THEM THE PROPHET LOVELESS REVEALED TO ME THE EXACT NATURE OF THE OBJECT BURIED BENEATH THE SANDS.
DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND, BROTHER ASHTON?
OUR DESTINY IS AT LAST AT HAND. WE HAVE FOUND THE LOST CITY OF R'LEK--THE CRYPT OF TULITU!

LOOK! A DOORWAY!
GOOD WORK, BROTHER BLAKE!
THERE ARE STAIRS LEADING DEEP UNDER-GROUND, AS FORETOLD IN THE PROPHET'S MASTERWORK, "THE SIGN OF TULITU"!
COME, MY BROTHERS! THERE IS NOTHING WE HAVE TO FEAR IN THESE STYGIAN DEPTHS!
IMAGINE IT! WE NOW STAND ON STAIRS NO HUMAN HAS TROD EXCEPT IN DREAMS--OR NIGHTMARES!
THE HIDDEN LAIR OF TULITU!
IS IT NOT AS THE PROPHET DESCRIBED IT IN "THE PINNACLE OF INSANITY"?

BEHOLD, MY BROTHERS! THE BLESSED SPAWN OF TULITU, AS FORETOLD IN "THE ABOMINATION FROM IPSWICH"!
O GREAT AND POWERFUL TULITU, LORD OF THE PRIMEVAL CHAOS, MIGHTIEST OF THE ELDER GODS! WE, YOUR FAITHFUL SONS, HAVE TRAVERSED THE GULFS OF SPACE TO ATTEND YOUR RESURRECTION! WE IMPLORE YOU TO WAKE! WAKE-- AND GIVE US A SIGN, THAT WE MIGHT KNOW YOUR WILL!
TUUU-LI-TUUU! TUUU-LI-TUUU!
DAY 33:
WE'VE BEEN OUT OF RADIO CONTACT WITH THE ESOTERICS FOR NEARLY A WEEK! I NEED YOU TO ROUND UP A RECON PARTY ASAP!
SIGH
I KNEW THOSE IDIOTS WOULD MANAGE TO CAUSE TROUBLE--HOLD ON! I'M GETTING AN INCOMING!
FOREMAN HERE. WHAT IS IT?
"SECURITY HERE, SIR. THE PERIMETER CAMS HAVE JUST PICKED UP SOMETHING HEADED TOWARDS THE BASE. IT LOOKS LIKE THE ESOTERICS."

"WHAT?! ARE YOU CERTAIN?"
"YES, SIR. THEY SHOULD BE ENTERING VEHICLE BAY 2-H IN APPROXIMATELY TEN MINUTES."
LUMLEY, YOU BETTER HAVE A DAMN GOOD EXCUSE FOR THIS!
YOUR CREW ISN'T DUE BACK FOR ANOTHER 57 DAYS, AND YOU KNOW IT!
AND WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA ABOUT KEEPING RADIO SILENCE--?
LUMLEY? I'M TALKING TO YOU, DAMN IT!
ANSWER ME! WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING--?!?
LUMLEY!
OF ALL THE UNMITIGATED GALL--!
NOTIFY SECURITY THAT THEY'LL BE ESCORTING THE ESOTERICS OUT OF THE COMPOUND FIRST THING IN THE MORNING!

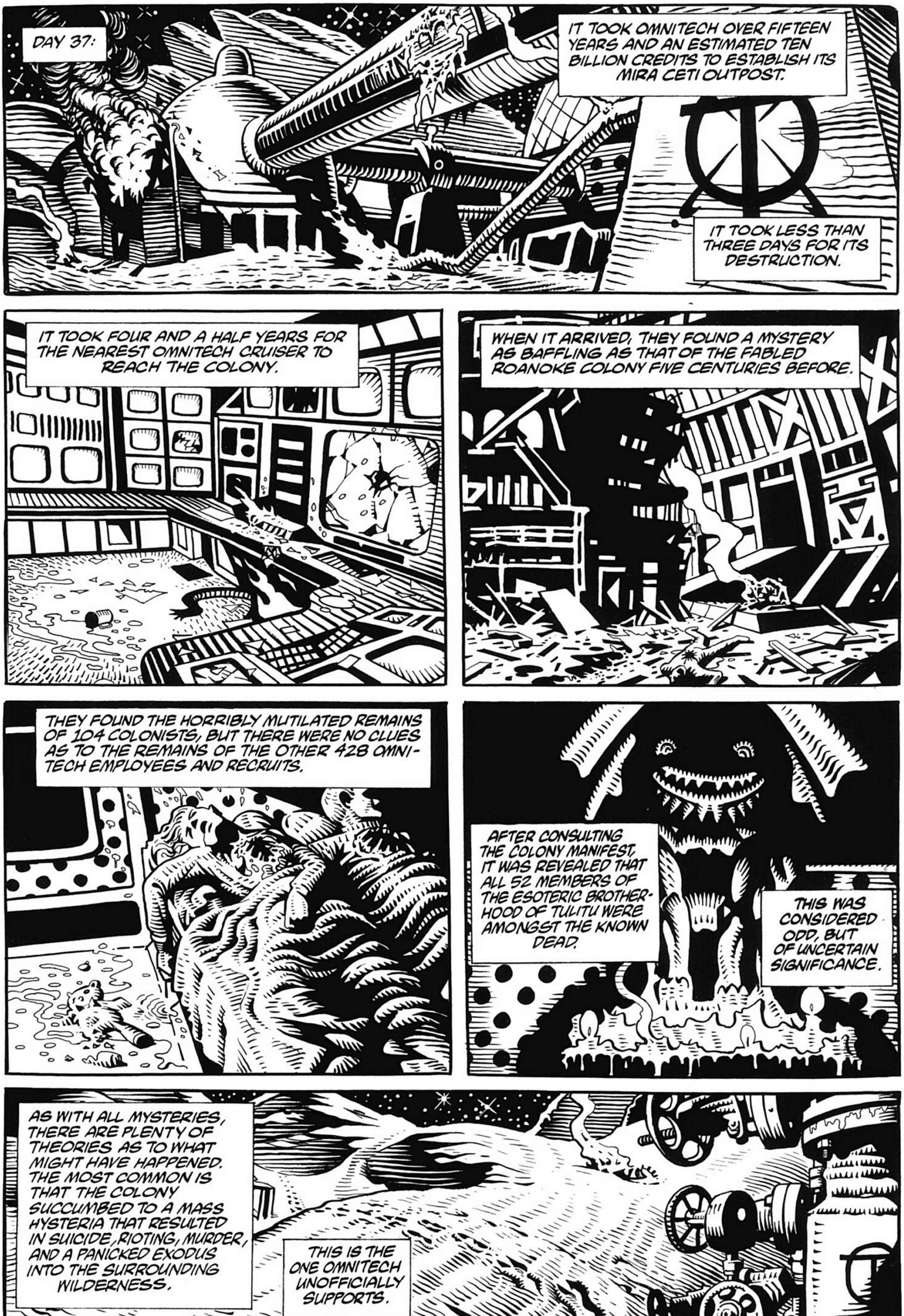
THAT NIGHT THE 532 HUMAN SOULS INSIDE THE OMNITECH COMPOUND, HAVING FINISHED THE LABORS REQUIRED OF THEM, CLAIMED THE EVENING HOURS AS THEIR OWN...
FOR SOME, THEIR OFF-HOURS MEANT SPENDING TIME TOGETHER AS A FAMILY...
FOR OTHERS, A BRIEF RESPITE FROM THE RIGORS OF REALITY...
OF ALL THE GIN JOINTS IN ALL THE WORLD, SHE HADDA WALK INTA MINE...
WHILE FOR A FEW, IT WAS A TIME FOR DARK SECRETS AND DARKER DEEDS...
...FOR ON MIRA CETI 4, AS ON EARTH, MIDNIGHT WAS STILL THE WITCHING HOUR.
HPL

DAY 34:
YOU LOOK LIKE SHIT.
THANKS.
I MEAN IT--YOU FEELING OKAY?
I WOKE UP WITH A SORE THROAT. I MUST BE COMING DOWN WITH SOME-THING--
DON'T GET ME WRONG-- IT'S NOT LIKE I'M A FAN OF THESE TOADS-- BUT ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS?
YOU AND I BOTH KNOW THAT INSUBORDINATION OF THE WORK DETAILS IS A DIRECT THREAT TO THE COLONY AND CANNOT BE TOL-ERATED, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES! I REALIZE THIS DECISION IS THE EQUIVALENT OF A DEATH SENTENCE, BUT THOSE IDIOTS HAVE LEFT ME NO CHOICE! I SHOULD'VE THROWN THEM OUT LAST NIGHT. ≈KOFF KOFF≈
WHA--? WHY ARE THE LIGHTS OUT?
LIEUTENANT!
WAY AHEAD OF YOU, SIR! SQUAD-- CONDITION ALERT!
DEAR GOD--!
WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED HERE--?!?
IT LOOKS LIKE A SUICIDE PACT OF SOME SORT--
TULITU LIVES
LOOK AT THE BODIES! THERE'S NO WAY SOMEONE COULD DO THAT TO THEMSELVES!
WE'VE GOT A LIVE ONE, CHIEF!

IT'S THEIR LEADER!
LUMLEY! CAN YOU HEAR ME? WHO DID THIS?
...FOOLS... TULITU HAS COME TO DELIVER US... TRANSFORMING US IN HIS IMAGE...
HIS WILL BE DONE...ON MIRA CETI...AS IT IS IN HELL...
JESUS--!
SPLORT
AHHHH!
WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?!?
BEATS THE SHIT OUTTA ME!
WHAT-EVER IT WAS, IT MOVED SO FAST I COULDN'T DRAW A BEAD ON IT!
OKAY PEOPLE! ON YOUR TOES!
DID ANYONE SEE WHERE IT WENT?
WHERE'S THAT NOISE COMING FROM?
HSSSSSSS
HOLY MOTHER-- WHAT ARE THEY?
THERE'S TOO MANY OF THE BASTARDS!
SQUAD: CONDITION RED!
M-MAYBE THEY'RE NOT HOSTILE--

NO SUCH LUCK!
BLAM
OPEN FIRE!
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM BLAM
AIIIEEE!
YAAAH!
SSSSS
GET THE CHIEF OUT OF-- EEYAAH!
NO!
FORGET IT! THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO FOR HIM!
WE'VE GOT TO WARN THE OTHERS!
THERE'S NO TELLING HOW MANY OF THESE THINGS THERE ARE IN THE COMPOUND--
"--OR HOW QUICKLY THEY CAN SPREAD."

MAVIS, GET ME THE COMMUNICATIONS ROOM! I NEED TO MAKE AN EMERGENCY ADDRESS TO THE ENTIRE COMPOUND!
MAVIS--? DAMN IT, WHY DOESN'T SHE ANSWER?!
EVERYTHING LOVELESS WROTE WAS TRUE!
THEY WEREN'T JUST STORIES, AFTER ALL! THERE REALLY ARE MONSTROUS GODS THAT LIVE BEYOND THE STARS! DON'T YOU THINK THAT'S FUNNY, CHIEF?
FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, MAN, DON'T LOSE YOUR GRIP ON ME NOW! WE NEED TO NOTIFY OMNITECH ABOUT THE SITUATION IMMEDIATELY-- UKKK!
CH-CHIEF?
URRGGGH!
KRAAK
HSSSSSSS
HAHA HA HAHA HAHA


DAY 37:
IT TOOK OMNITECH OVER FIFTEEN YEARS AND AN ESTIMATED TEN BILLION CREDITS TO ESTABLISH ITS MIRA CETI OUTPOST.
IT TOOK LESS THAN THREE DAYS FOR ITS DESTRUCTION.
IT TOOK FOUR AND A HALF YEARS FOR THE NEAREST OMNITECH CRUISER TO REACH THE COLONY.
WHEN IT ARRIVED, THEY FOUND A MYSTERY AS BAFFLING AS THAT OF THE FABLED ROANOKE COLONY FIVE CENTURIES BEFORE.
THEY FOUND THE HORRIBLY MUTILATED REMAINS OF 104 COLONISTS, BUT THERE WERE NO CLUES AS TO THE REMAINS OF THE OTHER 428 OMNITECH EMPLOYEES AND RECRUITS.
AFTER CONSULTING THE COLONY MANIFEST, IT WAS REVEALED THAT ALL 52 MEMBERS OF THE ESOTERIC BROTHERHOOD OF TULITU WERE AMONGST THE KNOWN DEAD.
THIS WAS CONSIDERED ODD, BUT OF UNCERTAIN SIGNIFICANCE.
AS WITH ALL MYSTERIES, THERE ARE PLENTY OF THEORIES AS TO WHAT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED. THE MOST COMMON IS THAT THE COLONY SUCCUMBED TO A MASS HYSTERIA THAT RESULTED IN SUICIDE, RIOTING, MURDER, AND A PANICKED EXODUS INTO THE SURROUNDING WILDERNESS.
THIS IS THE ONE OMNITECH UNOFFICIALLY SUPPORTS.

ANOTHER POPULAR THEORY HAS IT THAT THE COLONY WAS BESET BY ALIENS CAPABLE OF FASTER-THAN-LIGHT TRAVEL, WHO KILLED EVERYONE WHO RESISTED AND TOOK THE REST AS SLAVES TO A DISTANT STAR SYSTEM. BUT IF THAT WAS THE CASE, WHY WERE SOME BODIES FOUND STILL IN THEIR BEDS?
HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA
A FAR LESS COMMON THEORY, BUT ONE THAT CONTINUES TO PERSIST, IS THAT THE ESOTERICS SUCCEEDED IN SUMMONING A DEMONIC ENTITY THAT KILLED THEM AND SOME OTHERS, THEN DRAGGED THE REST OF THE COLONISTS TO HELL.
IF THE FINAL ENTRIES IN THE LATE FATHER LUMLEY'S JOURNAL SHED ANY LIGHT ON WHAT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED TO THE ILL-FATED COLONY, OMNITECH'S CEOs HAVE KEPT IT TO THEMSELVES.
HAHAHAHAHAHAHA
IN ANY CASE, OMNITECH HAS STATED THAT IT WILL NOT ALLOW THE TRAGEDY TO DISSUADE THEIR ATTEMPTS AT MAKING MIRA CETI 4 A VIABLE HABITAT FOR HUMAN KIND. AND AS FOR THE MYSTERY OF WHAT BECAME OF THE ORIGINAL COLONY...
HAHAHAHAHA
DOUBTLESS, THIS STRANGE NEW WORLD WILL MAKE ITS SECRET KNOWN WHEN LEAST EXPECTED.
HAHAHA
BUT UNTIL THEN, WE MUST SETTLE FOR MYSTERY.
THE END

ELDER GODS

script
NANCY A. COLLINS

pencils
LEIF JONES

inks
JOHN STOKES

lettering
CLEM ROBINS

title illustration
ROGER PETERSEN with **DAN JACKSON**

LIFE... LIFE WILL ALWAYS FIND A WAY.
FROM THE DEEPEST OCEAN TRENCHES TO THE COLD VACUUM OF SPACE, LIFE CARVES ITS NICHE-- KILLING... BREEDING... SURVIVING.
THE ALIEN IS ITS PUREST EXPONENT. A MECHANISM OF EXISTENCE UNDILUTED BY PITY OR REMORSE.
MEN CONSIDER IT EVIL, BUT IT IS SIMPLY DOING WHAT IT DOES. THAT IT DOES IT SO WELL IS WHERE THEIR FEAR LIES.
I DO NOT FEAR THE ALIEN... I LOVE IT.

FOR I AM *MOTHER* TO *MONSTERS*.

HEY, ELLIE! YOU GONNA LIE THERE ALL DAY?
WHAT IS IT, FLOYD?
US PUKEFACES ARE READY T'ROLL. WE'RE JUST WAITIN' ON YOU NOW.
OKAY. LET ME GRAB SOME CLOTHES.
DON'T BOTHER ON MY ACCOUNT! YOU'RE A THING O'BEAUTY T'BEHOLD AN' NO MISTAKE.
FLATTERER!
HEH! THAT'S ALL I CAN DO. EVERYTHIN' ELSE SHRIVELED UP AN' FELL OFF YEARS AGO!
BUT STILL, A MAN CAN DREAM.
HSSS
SCRAM, YA' MUTT!
WAP!
HSSS!

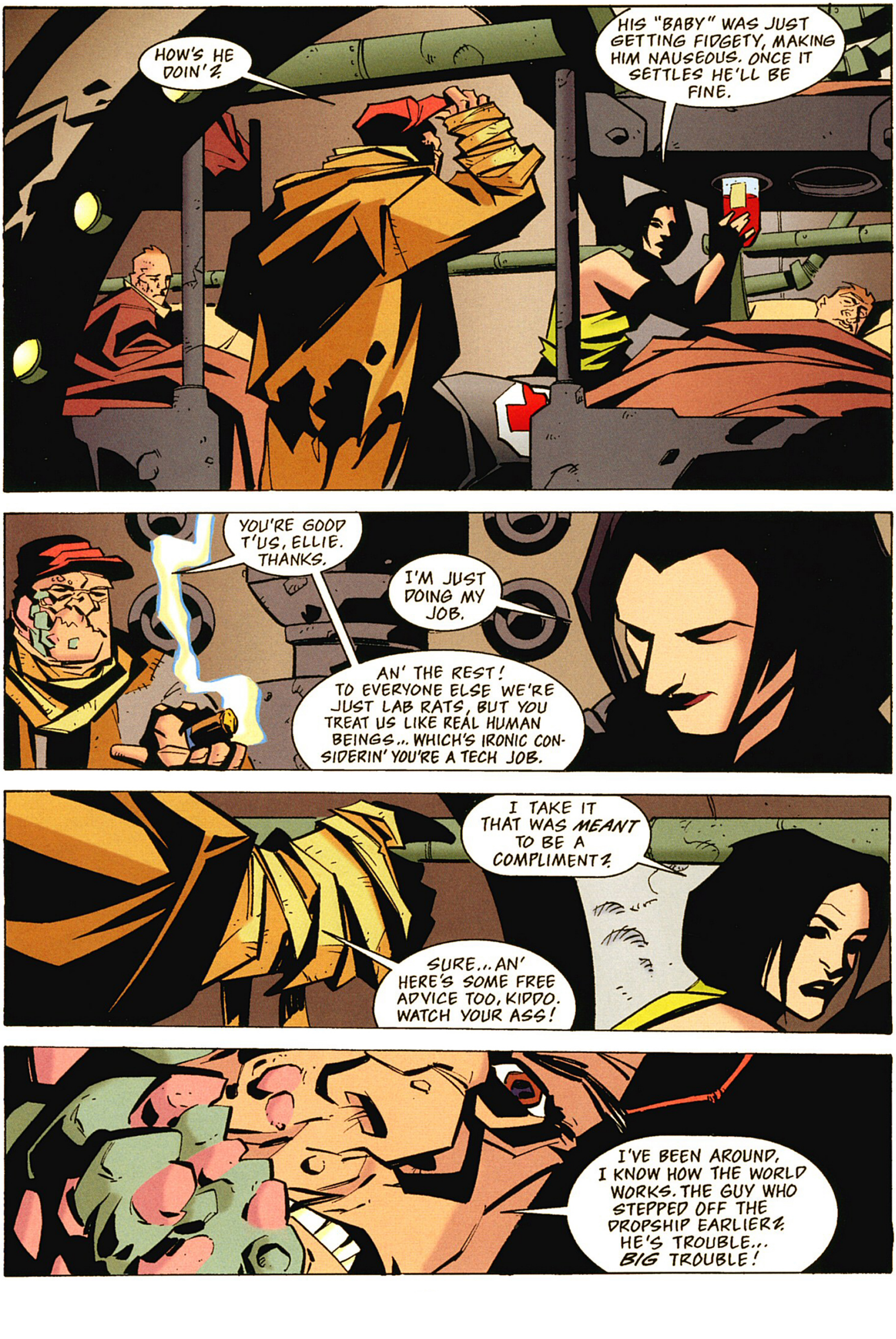
OH, A TOUGH GUY! Y'WANNA MAKE SOMETHIN' OF IT, EH?
HSSSS!
POOOFF!
I DIDN'T THINK SO.
DON'T BAIT THEM, FLOYD, YOU KNOW IT ONLY MAKES THEM IRRITABLE. GO AND PREP THE SHIP, OKAY?
YES, MA'AM.
IT'S TIME TO GO. AN ALLIANCE STRIKE TEAM IS ALMOST CERTAINLY EN ROUTE BY NOW.
IF WE STAY, WE'LL DIE.
THESE PAST FEW DAYS HAVE COME DOWN TO SOME HARD CHOICES... THEN AGAIN, THAT'S LIFE.

SEVERAL DAYS EARLIER...
PRSH!
CHUNKA
AH... WELCOME TO THE ADULLAM RESEARCH FACILITY, MISTER...?
Kang Kang Kang
COLONEL... COLONEL ARMAND GAUTIER.

I AM THE APPOINTED MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS FIELD OFFICER FOR THE ADELAIDE AND BOMBAY HOLDINGS ALLIANCE... YOUR NEW EMPLOYERS.
I'M DOCTOR FRED LICHTNER. WELCOME TO THE MONKEY HOUSE, COLONEL.
THIS IS NO SOCIAL CALL, DOCTOR. OURS WAS A HOSTILE TAKEOVER.
I'M HERE TO REASSESS THE FINANCIAL VIABILITY OF OUTPOSTS LIKE YOURS.
SURELY YOU CAN'T CLOSE US DOWN. WE'VE MADE SUCH STRIDES!
AH, YES, THE LEPERS!
WE'VE DISCOVERED DRY LEPROSY SOMEHOW RETARDS THE FINAL DEVELOPMENT OF XENOMORPH OFFSPRING IN THOSE IMPREGNATED.

THE HOST'S BODY SUSTAINS THE JUVENILE ALIEN, WHILE IT INSTILLS IN THEM A POWERFUL SURVIVAL INSTINCT.
THESE MEN WERE NOTHING, LONERS, SCUM. BUT FOLLOWING IMPLANTATION, THEY CHANGED...
...THEY KNITTED TOGETHER INTO A COMMUNITY, A HIVE. THEY MAY EVEN BE PSYCHICALLY LINKED.
YOUR TIME IS OUR MONEY AND YOU'VE RUN OUT OF BOTH, DOCTOR.
IT'S THE ALIEN ADAPTABILITY YOU SEE, IT--
I KNOW, I'VE READ THE FILE. THERE'S LITTLE PRODUCT RETURN FOR THE SUBSTANTIAL DOLLAR INVESTMENT HERE.
BUT... BUT THE ALIENS WON'T HURT THOSE CARRYING YOUNG! THE INFECTEES CAN WORK UNHARMED IN THE NEST.
SO CAN ROBOT DRONES. FACE IT, ALIEN RESEARCH IS OLD NEWS. IT'S EXPENSIVE AND DANGEROUS.
THE BIG MONEY IS IN ANDROID DEVELOPMENT. AT LEAST THEY DON'T BITE YOUR FACE OFF.
REALLY? PERHAPS WE CAN STILL DO BUSINESS AFTER ALL? PLEASE FOLLOW ME, COLONEL.

MORNING, FELLAS.
WHY, MISS ELLIE! TO WHAT DO US PUKE-FACES OWE THIS PLEASURE?
BERNET'S SICK, ISN'T HE? HIS "BABY'S" ON THE MOVE?
HOW THE HELL D'YOU KNOW THAT? HE ONLY STARTED ACTING UP COUPLE O'MINUTES AGO!
I JUST SENSED HE... THEY NEEDED ME.
WHO IS THAT WOMAN?
ELOISE, MY ANDROID.
BUT YOU DIDN'T REQUISITION ONE.
ALL WILL BE REVEALED, COLONEL. PLEASE, THIS WAY.


HOW'S HE DOIN'?
HIS "BABY" WAS JUST GETTING FIDGETY, MAKING HIM NAUSEOUS. ONCE IT SETTLES HE'LL BE FINE.
YOU'RE GOOD T'US, ELLIE. THANKS.
I'M JUST DOING MY JOB.
AN' THE REST! TO EVERYONE ELSE WE'RE JUST LAB RATS, BUT YOU TREAT US LIKE REAL HUMAN BEINGS... WHICH'S IRONIC CON-SIDERIN' YOU'RE A TECH JOB.
I TAKE IT THAT WAS *MEANT* TO BE A COMPLIMENT?
SURE... AN' HERE'S SOME FREE ADVICE TOO, KIDDO. WATCH YOUR ASS!
I'VE BEEN AROUND, I KNOW HOW THE WORLD WORKS. THE GUY WHO STEPPED OFF THE DROPSHIP EARLIER? HE'S TROUBLE... *BIG* TROUBLE!

MY GOD! WHAT IS THIS?
MY LITTLE SECRET, COLONEL. YOU WERE CORRECT, MY INFECTEE RESEARCH WAS A DEAD END.
HOWEVER, I QUIETLY KEPT TAKING THE FUNDING BUT COVERTLY PLOUGHED IT INTO A VERY DIFFERENT PROJECT.
WHICH WAS?
YOU'VE ALREADY SEEN HER.
HER... THE ANDROID?
NOT JUST ANY ANDROID. SHE WAS GROWN, NOT BUILT, USING THIS ALIEN QUEEN'S OWN DNA.

IN LAYMEN'S TERMS, I INFECTED AN ALIEN EGG WITH A BIOLOG-ICAL COMPUTER VIRUS USING LEPROSY SPORES AS A PROTECTIVE CARRIER MEDIUM.
IT DELETED AND REWROTE SPECIFIC DNA CHAINS ACCORDING TO ITS PROGRAM, GROWING AN ANDROID INSTEAD OF AN ALIEN.
ANDROID MORPHOLOGY IS HEAVILY BASED ON SILICON POLYMERS, SO IS THE ALIEN'S. IT WASN'T DIFFICULT TO MAKE THE ADJUST-MENTS.
ELOISE WAS AN UNEXPECTED PRODUCT OF AN EARLY ATTEMPT.
DOES SHE KNOW WHAT SHE IS?
MOSTLY. SHE'S FASTER AND STRONGER THAN NORMAL. SHE'S ALSO BEGUN DEVELOPING HER OWN EMOTIONAL RESPONSES.
SHE'S BONDED WITH THE LEPERS, BECOME A KIND OF MOTHER FIGURE TO THEM. POSSIBLY AN INFLUENCE TO HER ALIEN HERITAGE.
MORE IMPORTANTLY, NOW THAT WE KNOW HOW, WE CAN GROW ANDROIDS AT A FRACTION OF WHAT IT COSTS TO CONSTRUCT THEM. INTERESTED, COLONEL?
VERY, DOCTOR.

LATER...
ARE YOU TOTALLY INSANE, FRED? I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU TOLD GAUTIER EVERY-THING!
WHAT COULD I DO? HE WAS READY TO SHUT US DOWN!
WE'LL BE LUCKY NOT TO LOSE OUR BONUSES FOR THIS!
GROW A BRAIN, RUTH, THAT'S THE LEAST OF OUR WORRIES!
I'M SURE NOTHING UNTOWARD'S GOING TO HAPPEN. THE COLONEL SEEMS TO BE A REASONABLE MAN!
I WOULDN'T PUT MONEY ON THAT, DOCTOR.
I'M SORRY?
DON'T BE.

DO THEM ALL BUT LEAVE THE ANDROID.
I AM YOUR SUPERIOR NOW, YOU ARE PROGRAMMED TO OBEY ME. FOLLOW ORDERS OR DIE. UNDERSTAND?
YES... YES, SIR!
DOWNLOAD ALL THE DATA TO THE DROPSHIP THEN DESTROY EVERYTHING.
WHAT ABOUT THE LEPERS, SIR?
WHAT ABOUT THEM?

FWOOSH!
SKREEEEE!
I...I CAN *FEEL* THEM... KILLING.

CHAK
CHAK
CHAK
NO...
...NO...
BREKK!
BRAKKA!
BRRAKK!
REEE!

SLUTCH!
ENOUGH! LEAVE THEM ALONE!
THEY'RE MINE!!
UP AHEAD, THERE'S MOVE-MENT...
IT'S THE ANDROID! SHE'S LOOSE!
CALL IT IN! FOR GOD'S SAKE, CALL IT...

HOW'S IT GOING?
WE'LL HAVE FULL DATABASE ASSIMILATION IN SEVENTEEN MINUTES, SIR.
SIR, A REPORT'S COME IN. THE ANDROID'S GONE ROGUE, SHE'S KILLING THE MEN!
BUT HOW? HER PROGRAMMING--
ERR... DOESN'T EXIST, SIR. THIS FILE STATES SHE WAS A RESEARCH PROTOTYPE... THEY DIDN'T INCLUDE BEHAVIORAL INHIBITORS, ONLY A BASIC MORAL CODE.
GREAT! NOW WHAT?
SHE'S CUT THE POWER!
STEADY, SOLDIER, SHE'S STILL ONLY A MACHINE. LET'S GO TAKE HER APART!

IT'S OKAY, BOYS, YOU'RE SAFE NOW.
JEEZUS, ELLIE, I'M GLAD YOU'RE ON OUR SIDE!
I'M NOT THROUGH YET, FLOYD.

THIS PLACE IS STILL CRAWLING WITH GAUTIER'S MEN...
...IF YOU WANT TO LIVE, YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO FIGHT FOR IT!
US MUGS AGAINST CORPORATE COMMANDOS?! YOU'RE KIDDIN' ME!
I'VE NEVER BEEN MORE SERIOUS. BUT DON'T WORRY, WE'RE NOT GOING IT ALONE...
THERE'S NO SIGN OF THE ANDROID, SIR...
...OR THE REST OF THE MEN.
SIR, LOOK!
I SEE HER, SERGEANT.

WHY, GAUTIER? WHY ALL OF THIS KILLING? WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO GAIN?
IF YOU HAVE TO ASK THAT QUESTION, THEN YOU'RE NOT AS SMART AS THE GOOD DOCTOR LED ME TO BELIEVE!
LICHTNER AND THE REST WERE EXPENDABLE. WE ONLY NEEDED YOU AND THEIR DATA.
YOU'RE NO TRUE ANDROID, YOU'RE UNIQUE. A NEW LIFE FORM WORTH BILLIONS IN PATENTS ALONE. SURELY YOU MUST KNOW THAT?
YOU'RE RIGHT. I ALWAYS KNEW I WAS DIFFERENT SOMEHOW. I JUST NEVER KNEW HOW MUCH UNTIL YOU BEGAN BUTCHERING THEM... HUMAN AND ALIEN!
I COULD FEEL THEIR PAIN... THEIR SCREAMS EXPLODING IN MY MIND! MY FRIENDS... MY CHILDREN...
... AND YOU KILLED THEM! THEY WERE MINE! YOU HAD NO RIGHT TO TAKE THEM FROM ME!

YOU BROUGHT THIS ON YOURSELF.

LATER...
LIFE...LIFE DOES FIND A WAY.
I AM A HYBRID, A CHIMERA OF MACHINE AND MONSTER. I POSSESS THE COOL LOGIC OF ONE AND THE PRIMAL INSTINCTS OF THE OTHER.
I WILL PROTECT MY FRIENDS, MY BROOD, FROM THOSE WHO WOULD HARM US. SURVIVAL IS EVERYTHING.
IN TIME, I WILL DISCOVER WHO OR WHAT I *TRULY* AM, BUT NOT HERE, NOT NOW.
AN ALLIANCE INVESTIGATION TEAM WILL ARRIVE SOON TO FIND THE BASE OVERRUN WITH ALIENS... A TERRIBLE ACCIDENT...
...THAT NO ONE WILL BE ALIVE TO CONTRADICT.
I'M SURE COLONEL GAUTIER WOULD APPRECIATE THE IRONY.

PURGE

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IAN EDGINTON

pencils
PHIL HESTER

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lettering
GARY FIELDS

title illustration
DEN BEAUVAIS

"IT WAS JUST ANOTHER JOB."
FORCE 3
WELCOME TO VENUSBERG
BOYS
BAR
DANCE
GIRLS
SHOW
HI!
VISTA TOWERS

ROOMS 301-37
301
"IT WAS JUST ANOTHER JOB.
"JUST ANOTHER JOB.
"AND THEN SOMETHIN' HAPPENED... LIKE SOMEONE HAD THROWN A SWITCH...
"MY GUTS KNOTTED TIGHT... PANIC SWEPT OVER ME LIKE AN ICE-COLD WAVE AND I WANTED TO RUN... BUT I COULDN'T...
"...IT WAS LIKE I'D BEEN FROZEN THERE...
"EVERYTHIN' WAS ALL LIT UP, LIKE A SPOTLIGHT WAS SHININ' DOWN ON ME...
"...I KNEW EVERYONE WAS WATCHIN' ME...
"EVERYONE COULD SEE ME. EVERYONE COULD SEE WHAT I WAS DOIN'.

"SOMEONE CALLED MY NAME...
"NEXT THING I REMEMBER I WAS RUNNIN' LIKE A RABBIT DOWN PARIS PARADE."
WELL, FRANK, YA GOTTA BE DESPERATE TO STOW ON THIS WRECK... BUT I JUST DON'T GET IT...
YA FALL DOWN ON ONE JOB IN - WHAT - SEVEN YEARS? THEY AIN'T GONNA ICE YA FOR THAT, NO MATTER WHAT...
YEAH... SURE.
...YA JUST LOST YOUR NERVE THIS TIME.
I WAS IN THE WAR... I SAW A LOTTA GUYS LOSE THEIR NERVE... YOU'LL GET IT BACK.
ANYWAYS, WE BETTER BE MOVIN' OFF. I GOTTA BUNCH OF GREENIES ON BOARD I SAID I'D SETTLE IN.
THEY'LL BE GETTIN' ALL ITCHY BY NOW WONDERIN' WHERE THEIR GUARDIAN AN' PROTECTOR'S GOT TO...
"IT'S A KILLING MACHINE...
"IT'S A KILLING MACHINE AND WE'VE GOT IT ON BOARD."

IT WAS A KILLING MACHINE, MISTER CORILLO... NOW IT'S JUST A POPSICLE.
BUT WE'RE NOT TRANSPORTING IT IN THE RIGHT CONDITIONS.
THEY'RE AS CLOSE AS WE CAN MAKE THEM... AND IF YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT IT WAKING UP, REMEMBER THIS UNIT'S MADE OF STEEL MAGNITE...
THINK POSITIVE, CORILLO! WE'LL MAKE MORE FROM THIS THAN A YEAR OF DRUG RUNS. ENOUGH TO DITCH THIS CRATE!
THAT'S ENOUGH FOR US, TOO, CAPTAIN...
KRAMER, WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING DOWN HERE?
WATCHING WHAT YOU'RE UP TO WITH YOUR PAL, CAPTAIN!
WHATEVER IT IS YOU'VE GOT THERE, WE WANT A PART OF IT!... OPEN IT UP!
KRAMER, I'VE TURNED A BLIND EYE TO ALL THE PAYMENTS YOU GET FROM STOWS--
CHICKEN-FEED! BESIDES, IF YOU'RE GONNA DUMP THIS TUB, ME AND THE BOYS OUGHTTA GET SOME REDUNDANCY PAY... OPEN IT UP!
I CAN'T! IT SHOULDN'T--
OPEN IT!
ALRIGHT! BUT IT'S GOT TO BE FOR ONLY A SECOND...

OH,... MOTHER... YOU TWO ARE SICK... WE GOTTA GET THIS OFF THE SHIP--
NO!
THAT NOISE... WHAT WAS THAT NOISE?
NO.
FRANK?
DIDN'T HEAR A THING, MA'AM-- LEAST NOTHING ESPECIAL.

DON'T WORRY, KID... EVERY-THING'S GONNA BE OKAY...
...GO BACK TO SLEEP.
OUGHHAAAA!
WILL IT HOLD? WILL THAT DOOR HOLD?
I DON'T KNOW! WE'LL SEAL OFF THE SECTION!
OH, GOD... OH, GOD...
JESUS... YOU HEAR THAT, FRANK?
YEAH.

SHE DON'T HEAR IT... HOW'D YOU PUT HER UNDER LIKE THAT?
SHE JUST NEEDED SOME-ONE TO TELL HER TO SLEEP... LIKE A KID DOES.
WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT KIDS?
SHE LOOKED AT YOU LIKE SHE KNEW YOU... LIKE SHE'D MET YOU BEFORE, SOMEPLACE...
YEAH? LIKE WHERE?
"SHE WOULDN'T EVEN KNOW THE WORLD I LIVE IN..."
WELD THE DOORS CLOSED ON LEVEL SEVEN AND WELD EVERY DOOR FROM THEN ON--!
CORILLO, YOU STUPID BASTARD! WHY DID YOU BRING THAT DAMN THING ON THIS SHIP?
DOLAN, IF YOU HADN'T BEEN SUCH A MORON WE WOULDN'T BE IN THIS MESS!
NOW, DO SOMETHING USEFUL AND READY THE LIFE-BOAT! IF THAT THING CAN'T BE HELD, WE ABANDON SHIP!
ER... WHAT ABOUT THE STOWS? ...WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT THE STOWS?

HMM... NOW SOMETHIN'S FUNNY...
IS THAT... LAUGHTER I CAN HEAR?
ER...YEAH. FUN TRIP, HUH?
IT'S A COMFORTING SOUND TO WAKE TO.
LEANNE?
LET HER SLEEP.
YEAH, WELL... IT'S LUCKY YOU'RE A LATE RISER.
MY DEAR SIR, I DO NOT WISH TO DISTURB MY DAUGHTER, BUT LEANNE HAS THE KEY TO OUR GROUP'S TRUNK ...AND INSIDE THE TRUNK IS THE GROUP'S FOOD... AND I AM HUNGRY.
WHY DON'TCHA CARRY YOUR OWN FOOD?
WE SHARE ALL OUR POSSESSIONS, SIR... EACH MEMBER OF THE GROUP IS ENTRUSTED WITH THE PROTECTION OF ONE VITAL ELEMENT OF OUR GROUP'S NEEDS.
THEN I GUESS YOU'D BETTER WAKE HER UP.
THIS ENGENDERS INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ASSISTS THE GROUP'S ENDURANCE IN HARD TIMES.
HURRY IT UP DOWN THERE!
YEAH! YEAH! WE'RE ALMOST DONE!

I APPRECIATE YOUR CONCERN FOR MY DAUGHTER'S WELFARE, SIR... I'M AFRAID WE HAVEN'T BEEN INTRODUCED. MY NAME IS STOCKBRIDGE. JEFFREY STOCKBRIDGE.
AND YOU ARE--?
FRANK... THE NAME'S FRANK.
DON'T TAKE THIS BADLY, I BEG YOU, BUT SOMETHING ABOUT YOU REMINDS ME OF SOMEONE I'D RATHER FORGET... A... FRIEND OF MY DAUGHTER'S. A... SOLDIER.
HE LEFT HER.
WHY, YES...
FORTUNATELY, LEANNE HAS BEEN BLESSED WITH HER FATHER'S CONSTITUTION AND OUR FATHER'S GUIDANCE --THEY SHOULD SEE HER THROUGH THE RIGORS OF LIFE...
CAN I ASK YOU TO JOIN US IN OUR MEAL, FRANK?
HOW'S IT GOIN' OVER THERE, DOLAN?
TEN MINUTES. I GOTTA CHECK OUT SOME RUSTY LINEWEAR... YOU'RE PAYIN' FOR OVERDUE MAINTENANCE NOW, BOY!
WHAT'S HAPPENIN' ON SEVEN?
NOTH--
FREEZER

IS THAT... THE ENGINES?
NO... IT AIN'T THE ENGINES.
EVERYONE UP TO ESCAPE LEVEL! IT'S BUSTING THOSE DOORS LIKE **PAPER!**
DOLAN, GET THAT BOAT READY!... WE HAVEN'T **GOT** ANY MORE TIME!
I CAN'T GET THIS FIXED ANY FASTER!... YOU SHOULDA KEPT THIS THING **STRAIGHT,** CORILLO! THIS TUB'S A DEATH TRAP...
COME ON, COME ON! HURRY IT--
--UP...

I'D BETTER SEE WHAT'S HAPPENIN'.
YEAH?
THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU'D LOST YOUR NERVE, FRANK...
YEAH, WELL... THERE'S MORE TO IT THAN THAT...
TAKE THIS, SWITCH ON THE MOBILE, AND KEEP EVERYONE HERE UNTIL I GET BACK.
WHAT?
HEY, TAKE ME WITH YA, FRANK... YOU KNOW ME, I AIN'T NO GOOD WITH GUNS!
YOU'LL BE BETTER THAN ANY OF THEM WOULD.
THEM? SCREW THEM! LISTEN, I ONLY HEARD SCREAMS LIKE THAT ONCE BEFORE IN MY LIFE. YOU KNOW WHAT I'M TALKIN' ABOUT...
...IF THAT'S OUT THERE, I DON'T WANNA BE STUCK HERE NURSEMAIDIN' THEM...
...IF IT'S JUST YOU AND ME, WE GOT A CHANCE!

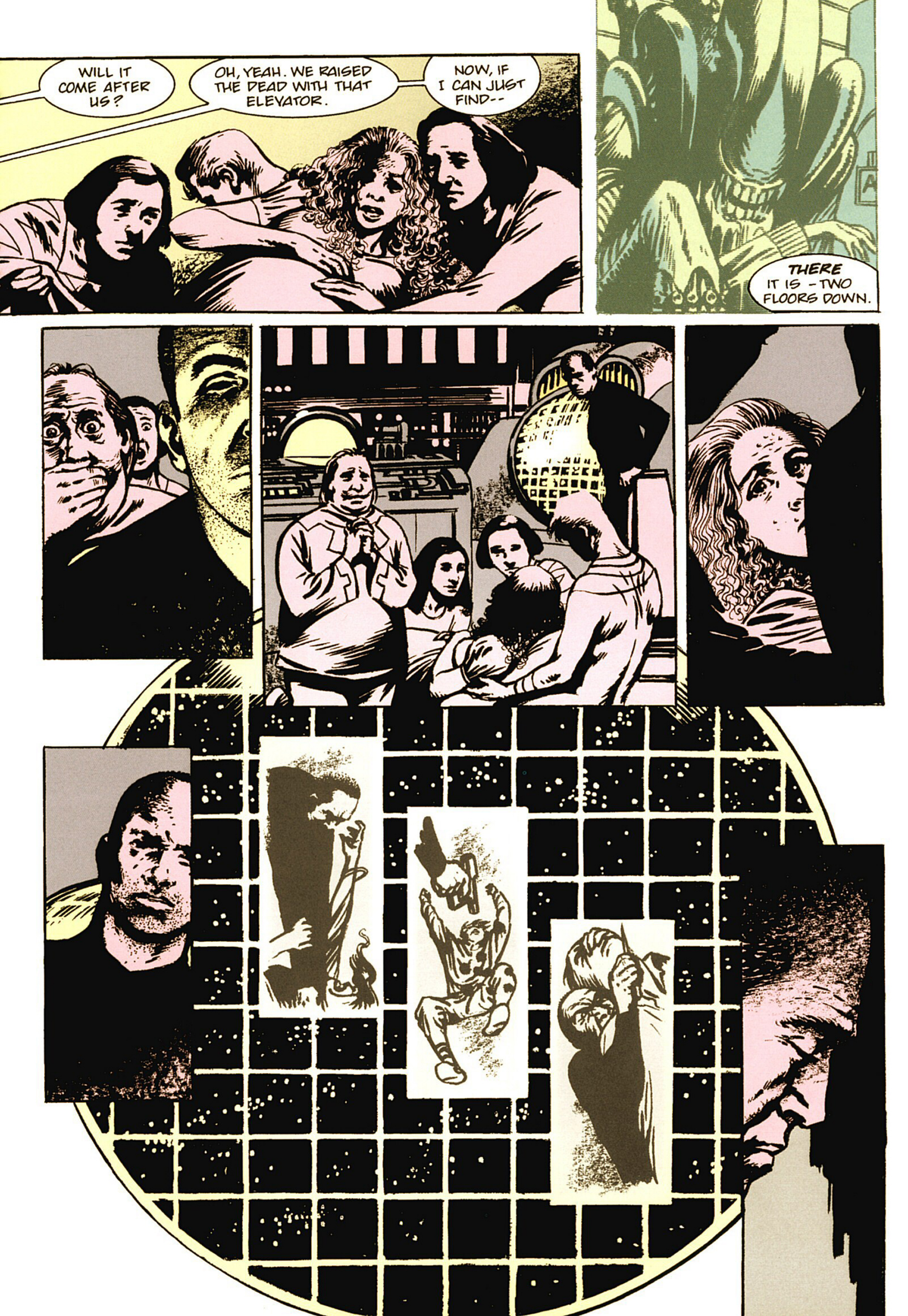
IF IT'S JUST ME, I GOT A BETTER CHANCE.
YOU BASTARD!... THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE GONNA DO, AIN'T IT? LEAVE US TO IT!
TAKE THE GUN, MICKY.
YEAH, GO ON!
I'LL GET BY! YOU CAN COUNT ON IT, BUDDY!
"WHO NEEDS YA? "
PLEASE DO NOT OBSTRUCT
"OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE THY NAME..."

...THY KINGDOM COME, THY WILL BE DONE, ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN...
"... GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD AND FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES, AS WE FORGIVE THOSE THAT TRESPASS AGAINST US...
"...AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL...
"...FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, THE POWER, AND THE GLORY, FOREVER AND EVER..."
...AMEN.
MICKY...
FRANK! FRANK! I KNEW YOU WOULDN'T RUN OUT ON YOUR OLD BUDDY!
YEAH, SURE... LISTEN, YOU WERE RIGHT ABOUT WHAT'S ON THIS SHIP. I'VE TRACKED THE SIGNS WITH THE C.C. CAMERAS.
LOOKS LIKE IT BUSTED OUT OF THE FREEZER --AND IT'S BIG. COULD BE BIGGER THAN ANY I'VE SEEN BEFORE.
CAN'T SEE ANY OF THE CREW EXCEPT FOR TWO DEAD. I GUESS THE REST HEADED FOR THE LIFE-BOAT, BUT READIN'S UP HERE SAY IT'S STILL IN THE BAY-- AND IT CAN'T FLY.
CAN'T YOU SEE ANYTHIN' ON ESCAPE LEVEL?
NO, THE CAMERA'S BLOCKED WITH SOMETHIN'.
THE CREW... IT'S MAKIN' A NEST...
MICKY, LISTEN...! THE SHIP'S STILL ON COURSE. IF YOU JUST STAY PUT THE THING MAY NOT SENSE THERE'S ANYONE ELSE ON BOARD.
JESUS ... WE'RE ALL DEAD MEAT...
I'VE SENT OUT A DISTRESS SIGNAL AND IN A DAY WE'LL PULL INTO PORT.

IF WE STAY PUT? HERE? DOWN HERE?
IT WON'T BE ANY SAFER UP HERE IF THAT THING'S ON THE PROWL... IF IT ISN'T, AND YOU ALL TRY TO COME UP HERE, YOU MIGHT WAKE IT UP.
YEAH, WELL, IT WON'T BE ALL -- JUST ME! IF YOU THINK I'M GONNA SIT HERE BABYSITTIN' WHILE YOU'RE SITTIN' PRETTY, YOU GOT ANOTHER THINK COMIN'!
MICKY! NO!
I KNOW A SHORTCUT TO THE BRIDGE -- RIGHT AWAY FROM THE ESCAPE LEVEL.
MICKY, STOP! GO BACK--
CLICK
DON'T WORRY KID... EVERY-THING'S GONNA BE OKAY...
AH, HELL...
I KNEW WE SHOULDN'T HAVE TRUSTED THAT... MICKY...
I'M SORRY, MY FRIENDS... IT SEEMS THAT ONCE AGAIN I'VE LED US DOWN THE WRONG FORK IN THE PATH.
DON'T WORRY, FATHER... EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE OKAY.

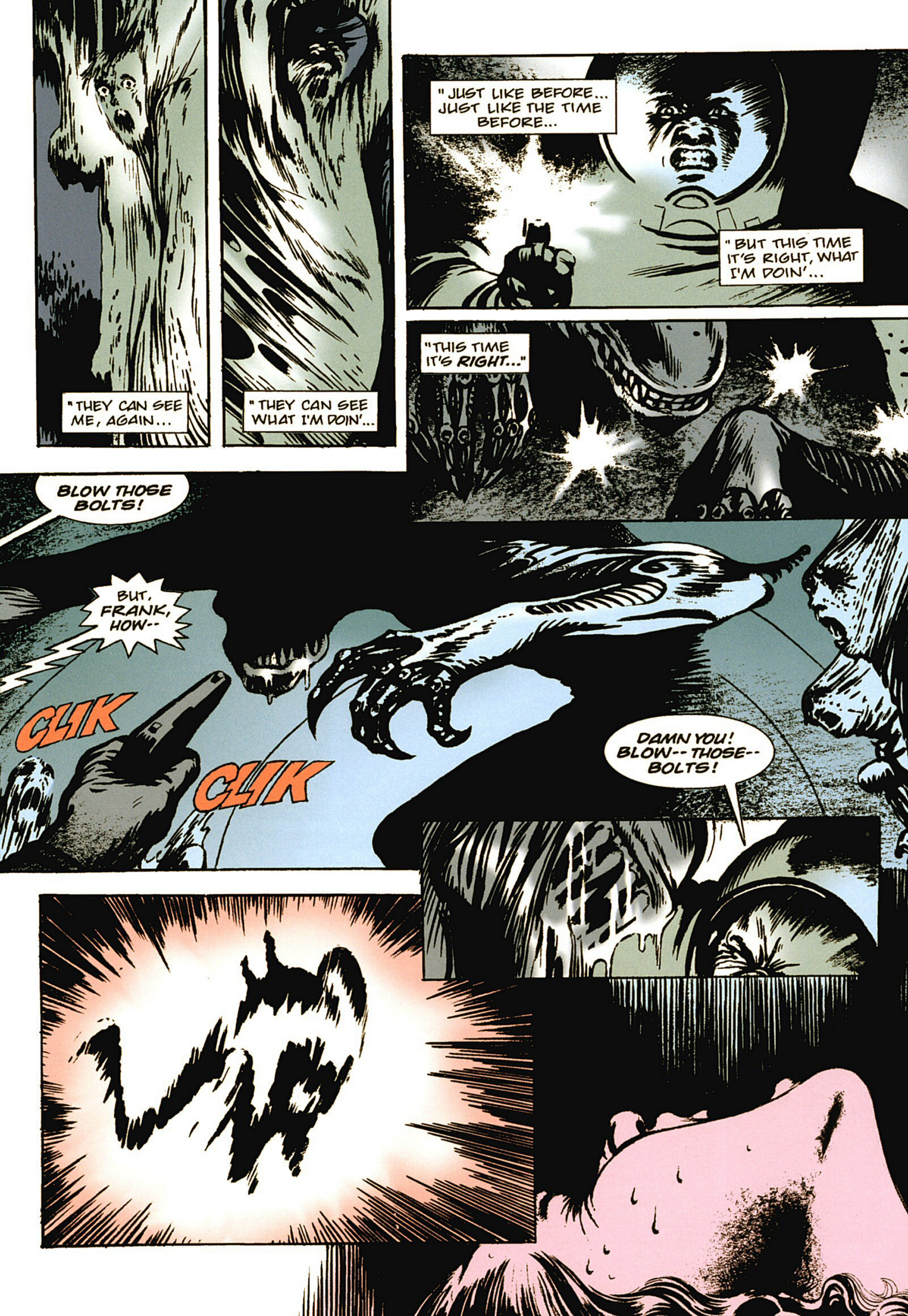
CABL
LINK
DANG
HIGH V
KEY
VOLTAGE

YAAAAHHH!
COME WITH ME! ALL OF YOU! AND MOVE AS SOFTLY AS YOU CAN!
W-WAS THAT... MICKY?
YES.
GOD HAVE MERCY ON HIM...
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO THE LIGHTS?
DAMMIT! BE QUIET!
OH!...AHH! AHH!
I'M SORRY, FRANK. I DON'T THINK SHE CAN MAKE IT UP THOSE...
OKAY, WE'LL USE THE ELEVATOR. GO TO THE RIGHT.
FRANK, WHAT'S HAPPENING ON THIS SHIP? PLEASE TELL US!
THERE'S A DEVIL ON BOARD AND IT'S RAISIN' HELL. THAT'S WHAT'S HAPPENIN'.
I THINK I KNOW WHERE MICKY MUST HAVE BEEN. I'M GONNA TRY TO GET THE THING ON CAMERA...
...IF I KNOW WHERE IT IS, I'LL KNOW WHAT TIME WE'VE GOT.


WILL IT COME AFTER US?
OH, YEAH. WE RAISED THE DEAD WITH THAT ELEVATOR.
NOW, IF I CAN JUST FIND--
THERE IT IS - TWO FLOORS DOWN.

STOCKBRIDGE, I GOT AN IDEA... I NEED YOUR HELP WITH IT.
SAFETY SYS
LIFEBOAT
"NOW, IF WE CAN LURE THE THING INTO THAT CORRIDOR, CLOSE THE AIRLOCK, AND REDUCE THE PRESSURE, WE CAN BLOW IT OUT INTO SPACE BY DETONATING THE EXPLOSIVE BOLTS THAT DETACH THE LIFEBOAT-- THEY STILL WORK."
"THE CORRIDOR BETWEEN THE LIFEBOAT AND THE ESCAPE LEVEL IS AN AIRLOCK...
HOW DO WE LURE IT INTO THE CORRIDOR?
DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT, THAT'S MY JOB... ALL I WANT YOU TO DO IS STAY UP HERE, CLOSE THE AIRLOCK, AND BLOW THE BOLTS WHEN I GIVE THE ORDER.
USE THIS TO TALK... BUT IN CASE THERE'S ANY INTERFERENCE WE'LL KEEP SHIPBOARD OPEN AS WELL--
AAHH!
I HOPE THAT AIN'T WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE...
THIS OPERATES THE AIRLOCK DOOR SEAL-- THIS BLOWS THE BOLTS.
PRESS 'EM THE SECOND I TELL YA TO.
GOD BE WITH YOU, FRANK.

YOU GETTING THIS, STOCKBRIDGE?
YES! YES!
STAND BY!
CLOSE THE AIRLOCK DOOR!
FRANK, HOW WILL YOU GET OUT?
DAMN YOU, STOCKBRIDGE! CLOSE IT! NOW!


"THEY CAN SEE ME, AGAIN...
"THEY CAN SEE WHAT I'M DOIN'...
"JUST LIKE BEFORE... JUST LIKE THE TIME BEFORE...
"BUT THIS TIME IT'S RIGHT, WHAT I'M DOIN'...
"THIS TIME IT'S *RIGHT*..."
BLOW THOSE BOLTS!
BUT, FRANK, HOW--
CLIK
CLIK
DAMN YOU! BLOW--THOSE--BOLTS!

WAAAH! WAAAAH!
FATHER?
"FATHER... SAY THE PRAYER FOR THE NEWBORN..."
END.

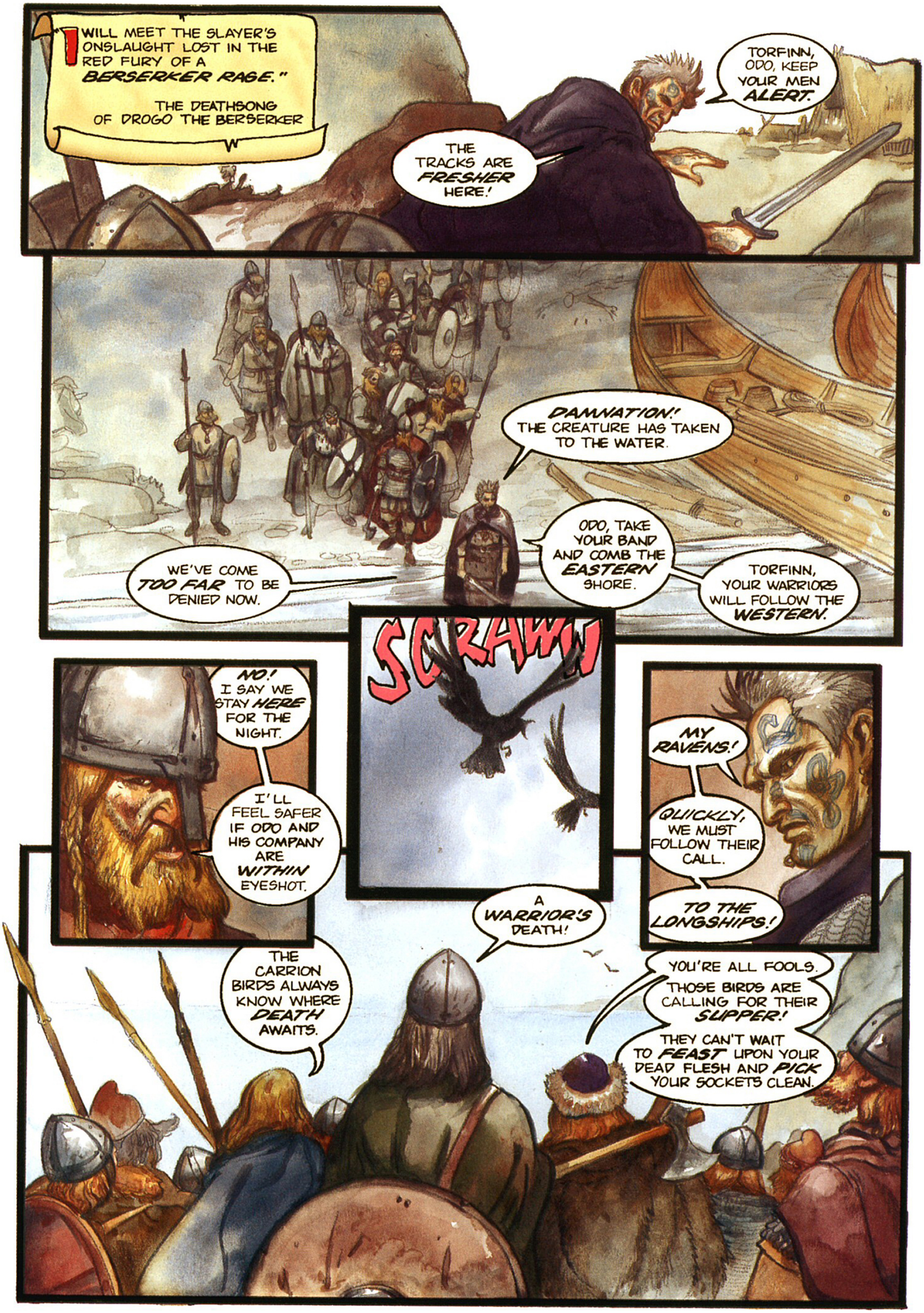
GLASS CORRIDOR

script and art
DAVID LLOYD

lettering
ELITTA FELL

title illustration
DAVID LLOYD

"I GO NOW TO THE DARK LANDS TO FACE THE BLACK SLAYER. IT WILL HUNT ME WITH ITS SIGHTLESS EYES AND REND MY BONES WITH ITS BUTCHER TALONS."
THE DEATHSONG OF DROGO THE BERSERKER
TORFINN, THE DEAD HAVE FALLEN THICKEST OVER HERE.
THESE MISERABLE WRETCHES HAVE BEEN GUTTED EVEN MORE SAVAGELY THAN THE OTHERS.
TAKE A CLOSER LOOK, TORFINN. EVEN YOUR DIM WARRIOR'S EYE WILL SEE MY FAMILY'S LIKENESS AMONG THESE BLOODY SCRAPS.
THERE LIE UNCLES, COUSINS, EVEN MY REGAL MOTHER.
TURN AWAY, LADY ALWIN, THE SLAUGHTER IS SICKENING.
LOOK TO YOUR OWN STOMACH.
I'VE ALREADY BEEN PRIVY THIS HORROR.
I FLED THIS VERY GROUND THE NIGHT THE CRAWLER RETURNED.
STALKER, WHAT SAY YOU? MY AXE IS THIRSTY. IS THE CREATURE NEAR?
NO, MY FRIEND--THIS SCENT OF BLOOD IS OLD.
WE WON'T FIND THE SLAYER HERE.
ITS TRAIL LEADS BACK-- TOWARD THE DARK LANDS.


I WILL MEET THE SLAYER'S ONSLAUGHT LOST IN THE RED FURY OF A BERSERKER RAGE."
THE DEATHSONG OF DROGO THE BERSERKER
TORFINN, ODO, KEEP YOUR MEN ALERT.
THE TRACKS ARE FRESHER HERE!
DAMNATION! THE CREATURE HAS TAKEN TO THE WATER.
WE'VE COME TOO FAR TO BE DENIED NOW.
ODO, TAKE YOUR BAND AND COMB THE EASTERN SHORE.
TORFINN, YOUR WARRIORS WILL FOLLOW THE WESTERN.
NO! I SAY WE STAY HERE FOR THE NIGHT.
I'LL FEEL SAFER IF ODO AND HIS COMPANY ARE WITHIN EYESHOT.
SCRAWW
MY RAVENS!
QUICKLY, WE MUST FOLLOW THEIR CALL.
TO THE LONGSHIPS!
A WARRIOR'S DEATH!
THE CARRION BIRDS ALWAYS KNOW WHERE DEATH AWAITS.
YOU'RE ALL FOOLS.
THOSE BIRDS ARE CALLING FOR THEIR SUPPER!
THEY CAN'T WAIT TO FEAST UPON YOUR DEAD FLESH AND PICK YOUR SOCKETS CLEAN.

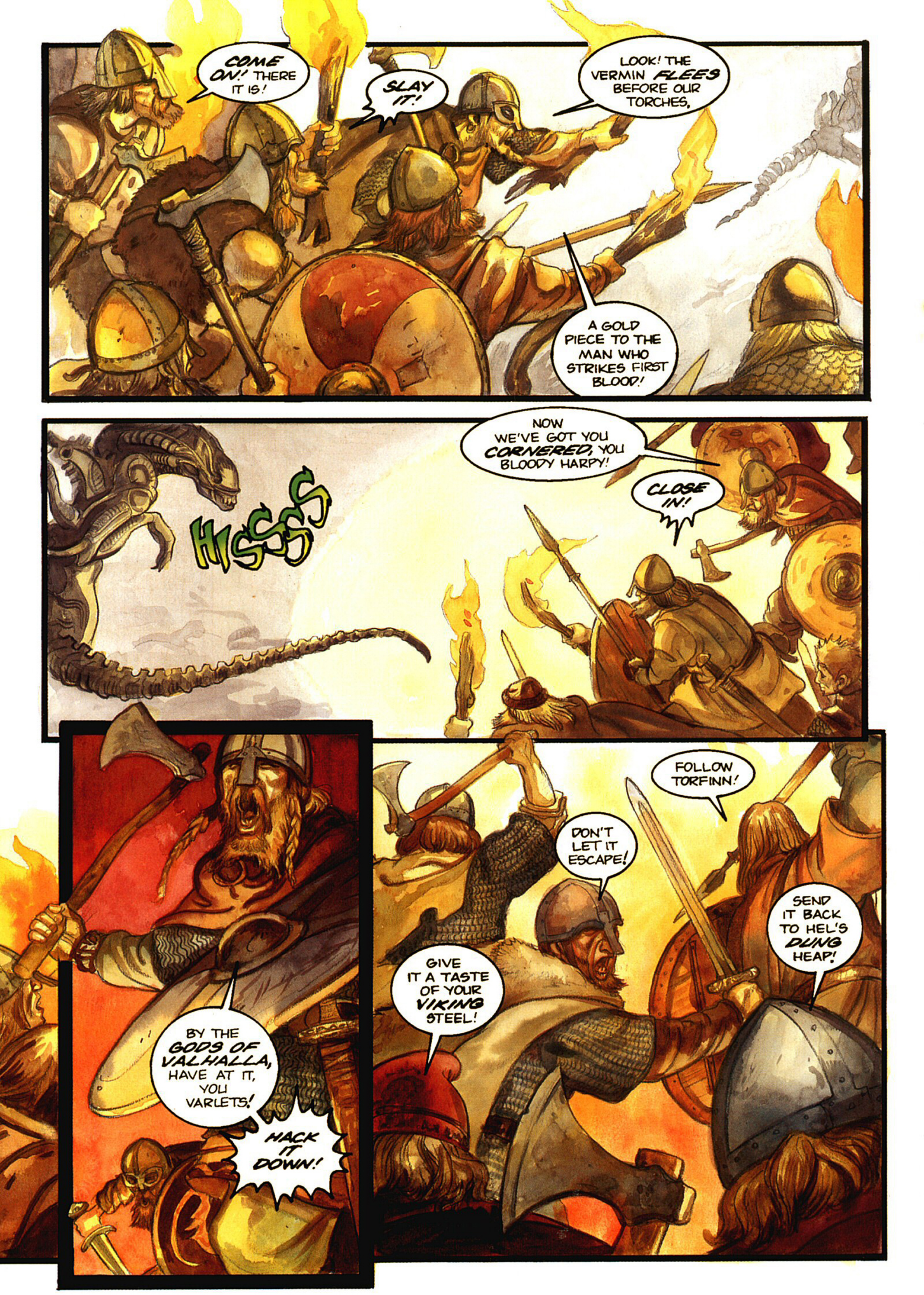
SCRAWWWWW
RAINULF, THE WRAITH-STALKER -- WE'VE COME TO YOUR GOD-FORSAKEN ISLAND TO ASK YOUR AID.
I'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU, WARRIOR.
THE SIGNS HAVE FORETOLD THAT THE CYCLE HAS COME AGAIN.
AYE, THE REEK OF DEATH IS ON THE UPLANDS.
I AM TOLD YOU WERE THE APPRENTICE OF GRIMOLF, THE FIRST WRAITH-STALKER.
DO YOU SHARE THE SKILLS OF YOUR DEPARTED MASTER?
I'VE NOT YET BLOODIED MY SWORD.
BUT, I'VE MADE THE SACRIFICES...
...AND NOW I RELEASE MY RAVENS.
THIS PALE CREATURE ACCOMPANYING US IS THE LADY ALWIN.
SHE AND HER BROTHER ODO HAVE ESCAPED THE SLAUGHTER ON THE UPLANDS.
WE ARE OF THE LINE OF DROGO.
AHH YES, THE ANCIENT KING WHO AROUSED THE WRATH OF THE FIRST CRAWLER.
LEGEND HAS IT THAT HE KILLED THE BEAST IN A BERSERKER RAGE.
BUT THE CREATURE DIDN'T DIE...
...AND NOW IT RETURNS EVERY FIFTY YEARS TO LAY RUIN TO HIS DESCENDENTS.

THE LADY HAS COME TO ME WITH A PROPOSAL. IF I WILL LEAD MY WARRIORS AGAINST THE BEAST SHE WILL AGREE TO BE MY CONSORT.
NOT BAD FOR A SCARRED SEA-RAIDER, HA, HA!
MY VIKING'S CUT WILL BE A SHARE OF HER LANDS.
DEAR SISTER, ONLY A FOOL WOULD GIVE HER LAND AND BODY SO FREELY TO PIRATES.
BROTHER, IT IS ALL I HAVE LEFT TO OFFER.
IF THEY SLAY THE CRAWLER WE WILL BE FREE OF ITS CURSE.
I'LL BEGRUDGE YOU THAT. MY MEN WILL JOIN THIS CURSED MISSION--BUT THEY WILL FIGHT UNDER MY BANNER.
AND WE'LL SEE WHO'S ALIVE TO DIVIDE THE SPOILS.
BROTHER, REMEMBER THE PROPHECY.
WHAT? THAT NO MORTAL MAN CAN DEFEAT THE CRAWLER?
YOU ARE ADDLED IF YOU THINK THIS UNTESTED APPRENTICE IS THE PROMISED REDEEMER.
I'LL CAST MY LOT WITH HIS LIKES--WHY, JUST LOOK AT HIM!
HIS HIDE IS TATTOOED WITH MORE MAGICAL SIGNS THAN A CELT.
AND HE'S ARMED WITH GRIMOLF'S BLADE.
WHY I'D WAGER HE CAN'T BE PIERCED BY TOOTH OR TALON.
IT'S TRUE I'M MARKED BY MYSTIC RUNES TO WARD OFF THE SPIRITS OF THE UNDERWORLD.
BUT I AM ONLY A MORTAL MAN.
WHEN I MAKE MY STAND AGAINST THIS CREATURE IT WILL BE WITH SWORD IN HAND.
I WILL JOIN YOUR HUNT.

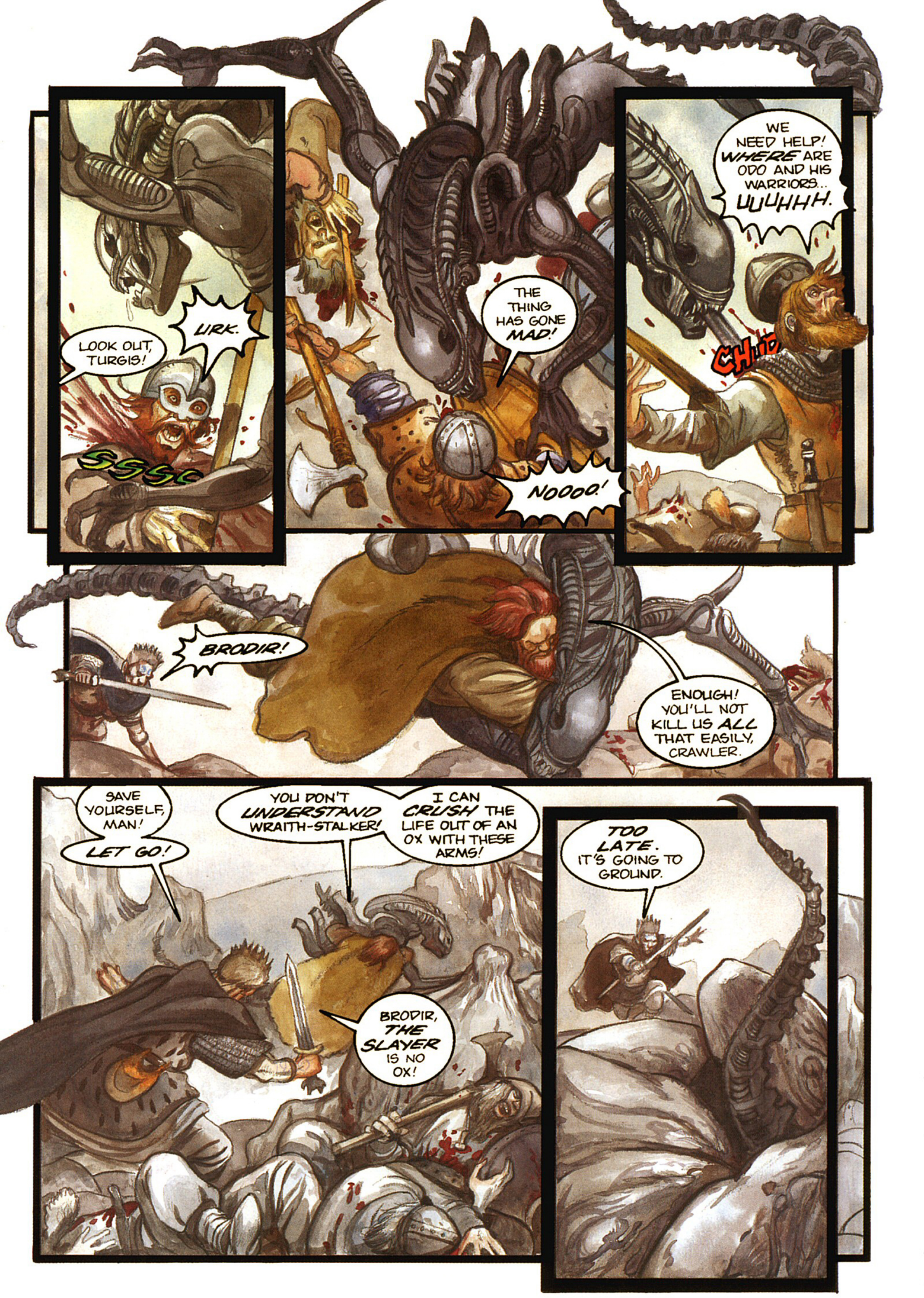
SET OUR COURSE WITH THE RAVENS.
THEY MAKE FOR THAT ISLAND.
LAY ON THOSE OARS MEN!
ODO, DO YOU RECOGNIZE THAT MIST-SHROUDED ISLE?
NO, THESE WATERS ARE UNFAMILIAR TO ME...
BUT ODO--
PREPARE TO BEACH!
BACK THE OARS!
PASS IT AMONG OUR MEN TO KEEP A TIGHT LIP.
STAY BACK AND LET TORFINN'S BAND TAKE ALL THE RISKS.
OVER THE SIDE, YOU SWAG-BELLIED LOUTS!
KEEP YOUR EYES SHARP AND YOUR WEAPONS READY!
GODS! WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
CAN'T YOU SMELL ITS STENCH?
WE'VE FOUND THE CRAWLER'S LAIR!

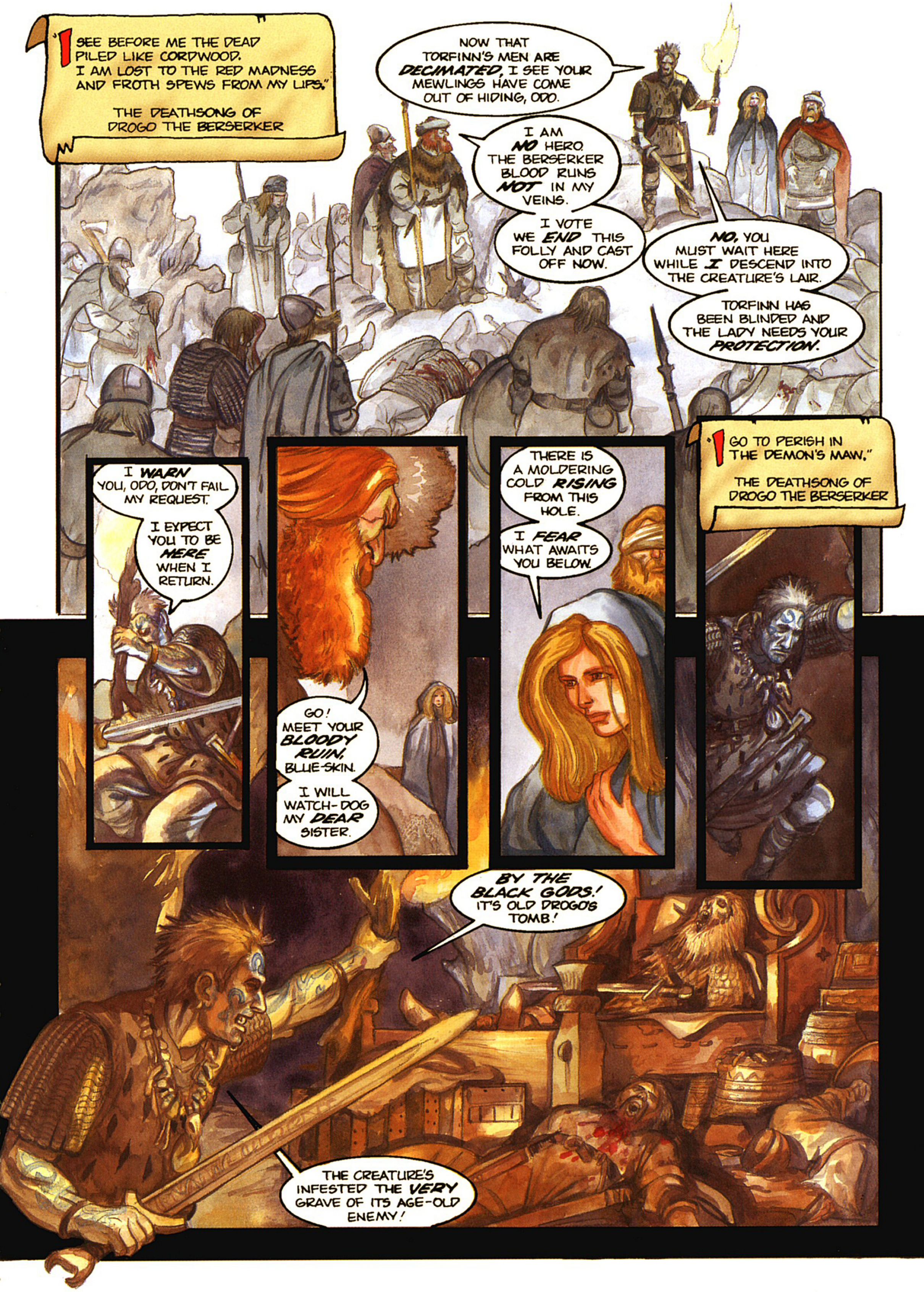
FAN OUT, WE'LL COMB THE ISLAND! EACH MAN KEEP THE MAN NEXT TO HIM IN SIGHT.
IT SEEMS, LADY ALWIN, THE TIME IS AT HAND FOR TORFINN TO KEEP HIS END OF OUR BARGAIN.
STALKER, WHAT CREATURE CAN TWIST THE LAND SO? THIS PLACE LOOKS LIKE THE BOWELS OF THE UNDERWORLD.
THE CRAWLER IS A DEMON SPAWNED FROM THE LOINS OF HEL HERSELF.
ANY OF YOU BRAVE LADIES SOILED YOURSELVES YET? HA, HA!
QUIET, BRODIR! KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT AND YOUR EYES SHARP.
THE MIST IS CLOSING IN.
EASY, LADS-- TIGHTEN UP THE RANKS.
COME ON, LODBROK, YOU'RE LAGGING BEHIND.
BLOW IT OFF, BRODIR. CAN'T YOU SEE THIS BLASTED OUTCROPPING IS BARRING...
... MY WAY.
THE CRAWLER.
UHHHH

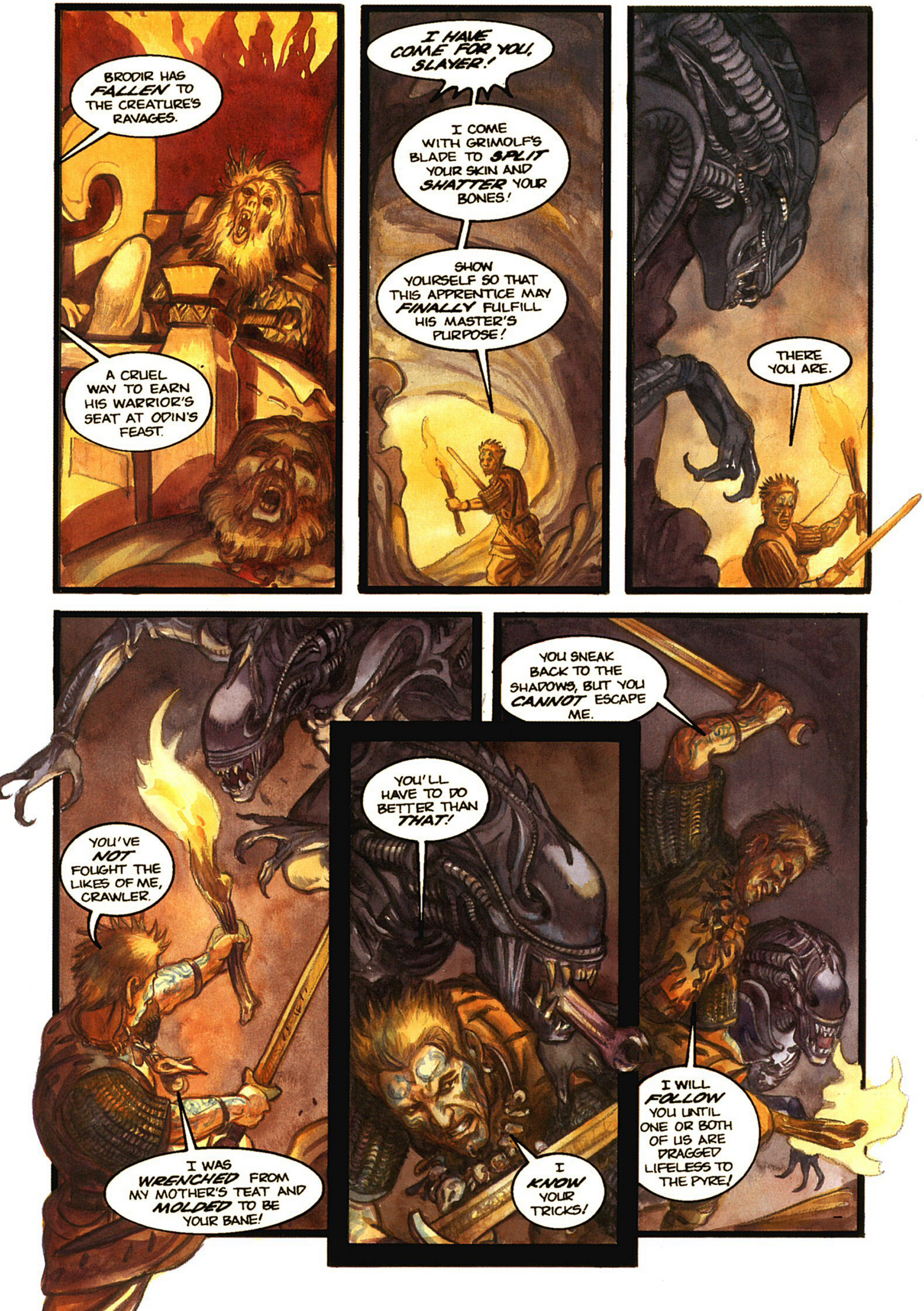
WHAT IN HEL'S NAME HAPPENED HERE?
IT WAS THE CRAWLER.
NOOOO! HELP!
IT'S BEHIND US!
AIEEEEEEE
NOO!
IT'S PICKING US OFF ONE BY ONE!
QUICKLY, GATHER THE DEADWOOD AND PILE IT IN THE CLEARING!
GRIMOLF SHOWED ME A FEW TRICKS BEFORE HE DIED.
LET'S HOPE THIS ONE...
CHIK
...WORKS!
FWOOSH
THERE, IN THE MIST.
I SEE THE CRAWLER!
IT'S STANDING OFF.
THE FIRE IS KEEPING IT AT BAY!
IT FEARS THE FLAMES!
QUICKLY, TAKE UP YOUR TORCHES.
AYE!
KILL THE CRAWLER!
WE'LL DESTROY THE BEAST WITH FIRE AND STEEL!
NO! YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. THIS IS MY BATTLE.
AND I FIGHT ALONE.
OUT OF THE WAY, RUNE-SKIN.
CAN'T YOU SEE THE BLOOD LUST IS UPON US?


COME ON! THERE IT IS!
SLAY IT!
LOOK! THE VERMIN FLEES BEFORE OUR TORCHES.
A GOLD PIECE TO THE MAN WHO STRIKES FIRST BLOOD!
NOW WE'VE GOT YOU CORNERED, YOU BLOODY HARPY!
CLOSE IN!
HISSSS
BY THE GODS OF VALHALLA, HAVE AT IT, YOU VARLETS!
HACK IT DOWN!
FOLLOW TORFINN!
DON'T LET IT ESCAPE!
GIVE IT A TASTE OF YOUR VIKING STEEL!
SEND IT BACK TO HEL'S DUNG HEAP!

SSSSSSSSS
DRIVE IT BACK ON THE SPEARS!
BY THOR! ITS HIDE IS LIKE ARMOR!
TRY TO FIND ITS WEAK SPOT!
TORFINN, IF THIS IS YOUR FIGHT YOU MUST STRIKE NOW!
I HEAR YOU, RUNE-SKIN!
CRAK
LET TORFINN SHOW YOU QUAILING BABES HOW TO CLEAVE A CARCASS!
HE'S HURT THE THING.
SEE HOW IT WRITHES.
COME ON! LET'S FINISH IT!
WAIT. WHAT'S WRONG WITH TORFINN?
ARRRR MY EYES! MY EYES!
THE CRAWLER'S BLOOD IS DEVOURING THE IRON ON TORFINN'S HELM!

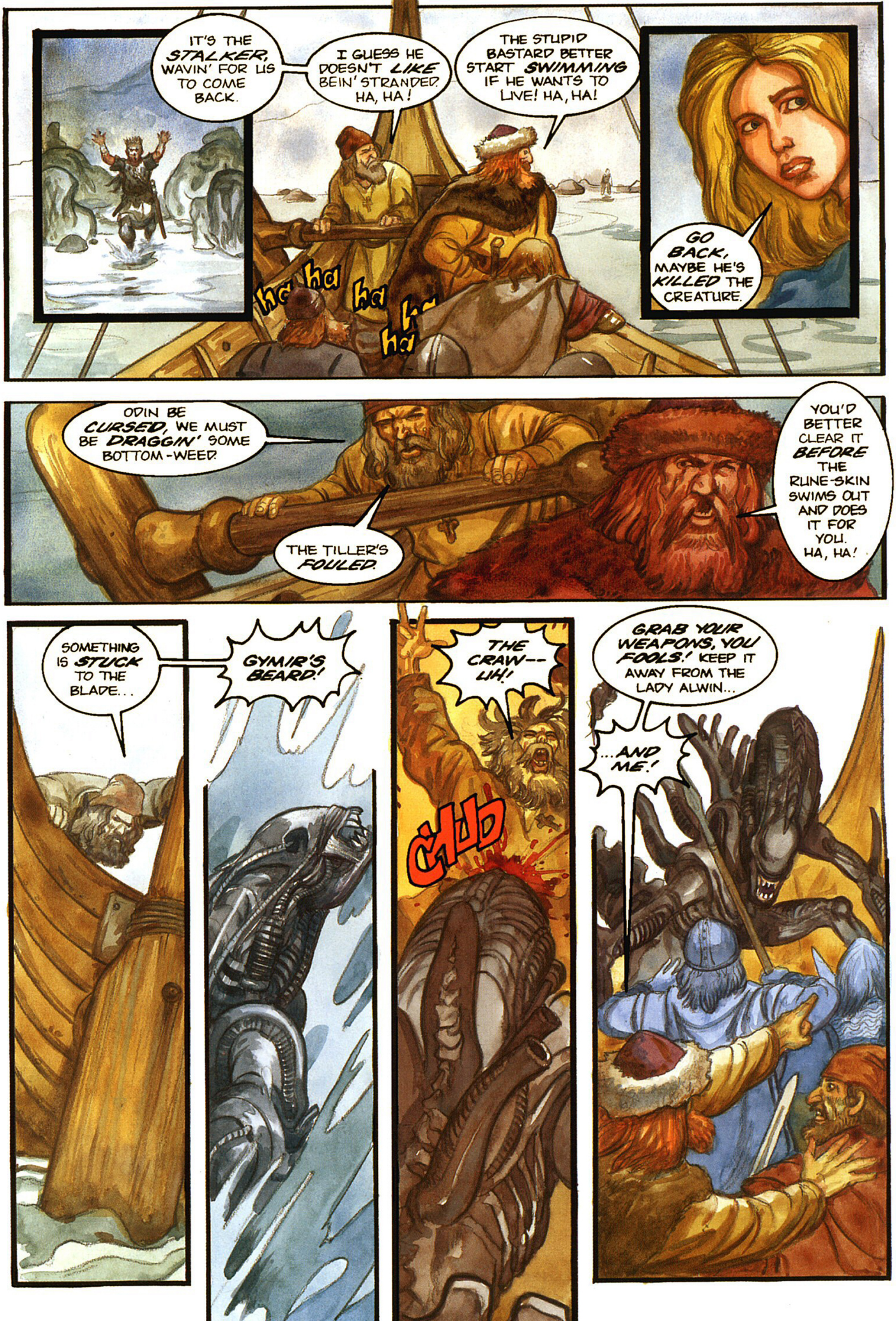

LOOK OUT, TURGIS!
URK.
THE THING HAS GONE MAD!
NOOOO!
WE NEED HELP! WHERE ARE ODO AND HIS WARRIORS... UUUHHH.
BRODIR!
ENOUGH! YOU'LL NOT KILL US ALL THAT EASILY, CRAWLER.
SAVE YOURSELF, MAN!
LET GO!
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND WRAITH-STALKER!
I CAN CRUSH THE LIFE OUT OF AN OX WITH THESE ARMS!
BRODIR, THE SLAYER IS NO OX!
TOO LATE. IT'S GOING TO GROUND.


"I SEE BEFORE ME THE DEAD PILED LIKE CORDWOOD. I AM LOST TO THE RED MADNESS AND FROTH SPEWS FROM MY LIPS."
THE DEATHSONG OF DROGO THE BERSERKER
NOW THAT TORFINN'S MEN ARE DECIMATED, I SEE YOUR MEWLINGS HAVE COME OUT OF HIDING, ODO.
I AM NO HERO. THE BERSERKER BLOOD RUNS NOT IN MY VEINS.
I VOTE WE END THIS FOLLY AND CAST OFF NOW.
NO, YOU MUST WAIT HERE WHILE I DESCEND INTO THE CREATURE'S LAIR.
TORFINN HAS BEEN BLINDED AND THE LADY NEEDS YOUR PROTECTION.
I WARN YOU, ODO, DON'T FAIL MY REQUEST.
I EXPECT YOU TO BE HERE WHEN I RETURN.
GO! MEET YOUR BLOODY RUIN, BLUE-SKIN.
I WILL WATCH-DOG MY DEAR SISTER.
THERE IS A MOLDERING COLD RISING FROM THIS HOLE.
I FEAR WHAT AWAITS YOU BELOW.
"I GO TO PERISH IN THE DEMON'S MAW."
THE DEATHSONG OF DROGO THE BERSERKER
BY THE BLACK GODS! IT'S OLD DROGO'S TOMB!
THE CREATURE'S INFESTED THE VERY GRAVE OF ITS AGE-OLD ENEMY!


BRODIR HAS FALLEN TO THE CREATURE'S RAVAGES.
A CRUEL WAY TO EARN HIS WARRIOR'S SEAT AT ODIN'S FEAST.
I HAVE COME FOR YOU, SLAYER!
I COME WITH GRIMOLF'S BLADE TO SPLIT YOUR SKIN AND SHATTER YOUR BONES!
SHOW YOURSELF SO THAT THIS APPRENTICE MAY FINALLY FULFILL HIS MASTER'S PURPOSE!
THERE YOU ARE.
YOU'VE NOT FOUGHT THE LIKES OF ME, CRAWLER.
I WAS WRENCHED FROM MY MOTHER'S TEAT AND MOLDED TO BE YOUR BANE!
YOU'LL HAVE TO DO BETTER THAN THAT!
I KNOW YOUR TRICKS!
YOU SNEAK BACK TO THE SHADOWS, BUT YOU CANNOT ESCAPE ME.
I WILL FOLLOW YOU UNTIL ONE OR BOTH OF US ARE DRAGGED LIFELESS TO THE PYRE!

WHAT'S HAPPENING?
THE STALKER'S TORCH IS DISAPPEARING DEEPER INTO THE DARKNESS.
THE PREY IS BEING LURED TO THE SLAUGHTER.
DAMN! I'M LOSING MY DIRECTION IN THIS LABYRINTH OF TUNNELS.
THE CREATURE HAS HONEY-COMBED THIS ISLAND LIKE A RABBIT WARREN.
ODO, OUR MEN OUTNUMBER TORFINN'S SURVIVORS.
THEN THE TIME IS RIPE...
SSSSS
MY TORCH!
...TO POINT OUT TO TORFINN THAT...
...WE NO LONGER NEED HIM!
FAREWELL, WARRIOR.
CHK
UHHH!

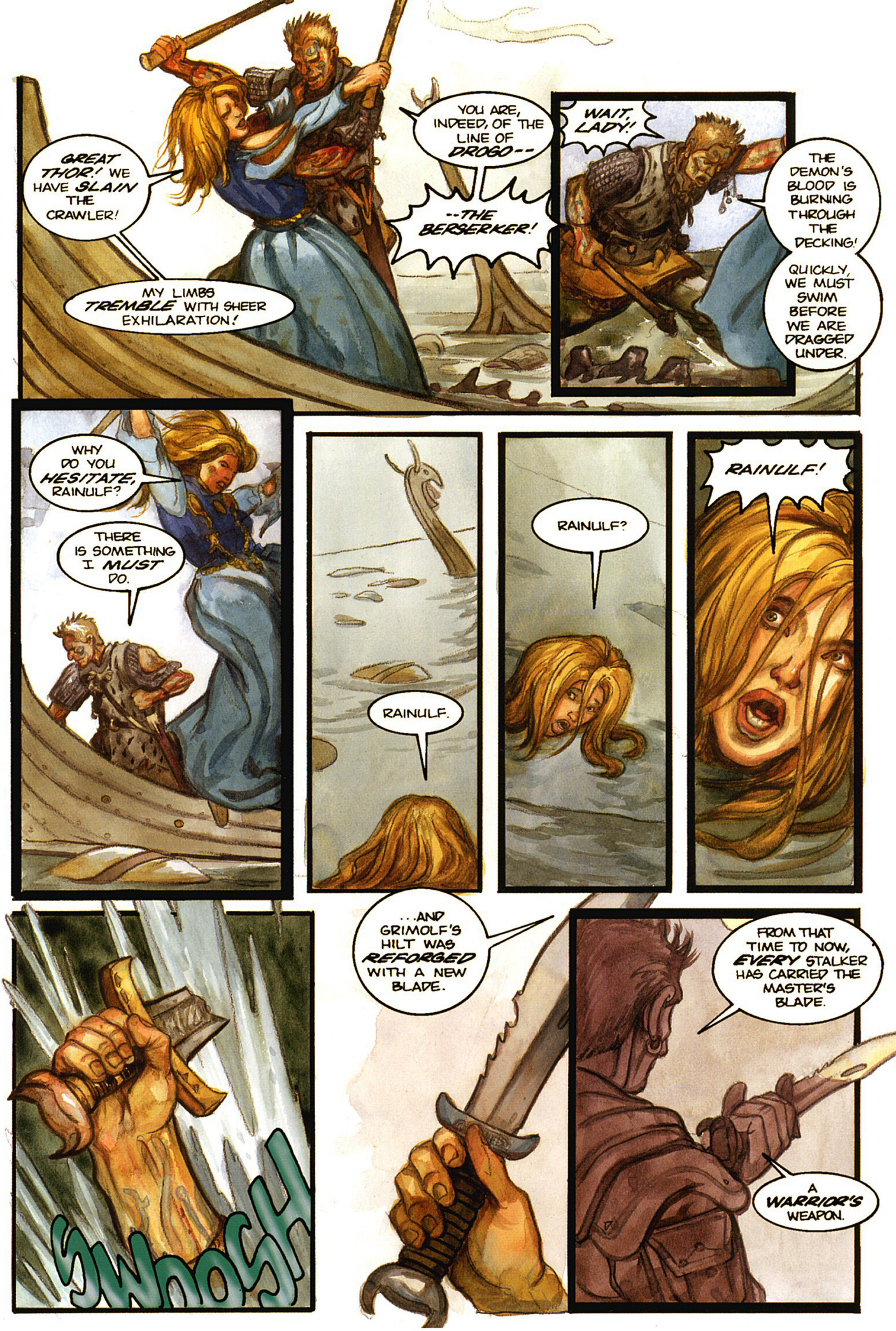
THERE'S NO SIGN OF THE STALKER OR THE CREATURE...
...BUT BY THE GODS! THE DEN LOOKS TO BE CRAWLING WITH TREASURE!
I SUSPECTED AS MUCH. IT'S MY GREAT-GREAT-GRANDFATHER'S BURIAL HORDE!
ROUND UP WHAT'S LEFT OF TORFINN'S BAND AND PUT THEM TO HAULING!
STEP LIVELY, YOU DOGS.
SISTER, CHEER UP. YOU'RE FREE OF TORFINN'S YOKE, AND RICH TO BOOT.
I WANT NO PART OF THAT TREASURE.
WHAT YOU'RE DOING IS SACRILEGE.
HURRY UP! IT WON'T TAKE THAT DEMON LONG TO FINISH OFF THE RUNE-SKIN.
HELMSMAN, MAKE FOR THE OPEN SEA.
WE'LL TAKE THIS TROVE TO THE SOUTHLANDS AND BUY OURSELVES A NEW KINGDOM.
THE CRAWLER CAN KEEP OLD DROGO'S FOR ETERNITY FOR ALL I CARE.
CAPTAIN ODO! THERE'S SOMETHIN' WADIN' OUT AFTER US!


IT'S THE STALKER, WAVIN' FOR US TO COME BACK.
I GUESS HE DOESN'T LIKE BEIN' STRANDED. HA, HA!
THE STUPID BASTARD BETTER START SWIMMING IF HE WANTS TO LIVE! HA, HA!
ha ha ha ha ha
GO BACK, MAYBE HE'S KILLED THE CREATURE.
ODIN BE CURSED, WE MUST BE DRAGGIN' SOME BOTTOM-WEED.
THE TILLER'S FOULED.
YOU'D BETTER CLEAR IT BEFORE THE RUNE-SKIN SWIMS OUT AND DOES IT FOR YOU. HA, HA!
SOMETHING IS STUCK TO THE BLADE...
GYMIR'S BEARD!
THE CRAW-- UH!
CHUD
GRAB YOUR WEAPONS, YOU FOOLS! KEEP IT AWAY FROM THE LADY ALWIN...
...AND ME!

ALL OF YOU INTO THE BREACH! STRIKE NOW!
BY THE GODS! CAN NONE OF YOU STOP IT?
ARM THE PRISONERS!
ODO! ODO! PLEASE DON'T LEAVE ME!
LET GO, SISTER! CAN'T YOU SEE IT'S KILLED THE LAST WARRIOR?
MY ONLY CHANCE IS OVERBOARD!
NO! NO! I LEFT YOU MY SISTER!
BROTHER?
GREAT ODIN . . . ODO.

pant pant WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME? pant
IT'S THE BLOOD MADNESS!
THE GODS BE DAMNED, THE RED RAGE IS UPON ME!
R'IPPP
I NEED A WEAPON.
AN AXE.
AN AXE TO KILL WITH!
COME!
COME TO ME, HEL-CRAWLER.
LET ME HACK THE BILE OUT OF YOUR TWISTED SOUL!
I'LL GNAW YOUR BLACKENED HEART AND LET THE PUS RUN DOWN MY CHIN!
CRAWLER!
I'VE COME BACK FOR YOU.
LET ME DEAL YOU DEATH!
CHINK
YOU'VE TAKEN BLADE!

BUT THE HILT...
...CAN STILL STRIKE WITH ITS...
...JAWS!
FOOLISH MAN! REMEMBER THE LEGEND!
THE DEMON CANNOT BE KILLED BY A MORTAL MAN!
BUT THE MORTAL WHO STRIKES THIS BLOW IS A...
WOMAN!
YOU'VE OPENED ITS NECK.
I'LL OPEN MORE THAN THAT!
DIE!
DIE!
DIE!
CHK
CHK
CHK
IT'S DONE!


GREAT THOR! WE HAVE SLAIN THE CRAWLER!
MY LIMBS TREMBLE WITH SHEER EXHILARATION!
YOU ARE, INDEED, OF THE LINE OF DROGO--
--THE BERSERKER!
WAIT, LADY!
THE DEMON'S BLOOD IS BURNING THROUGH THE DECKING!
QUICKLY, WE MUST SWIM BEFORE WE ARE DRAGGED UNDER.
WHY DO YOU HESITATE, RAINULF?
THERE IS SOMETHING I MUST DO.
RAINULF.
RAINULF?
RAINULF!
SWOOSH
...AND GRIMOLF'S HILT WAS REFORGED WITH A NEW BLADE.
FROM THAT TIME TO NOW, EVERY STALKER HAS CARRIED THE MASTER'S BLADE.
A WARRIOR'S WEAPON.

YOU SCRUB-HEADS WANTED TO KNOW THE STORY BEHIND THIS STICKER.
SO THERE IT IS.
RAINY, I GOTTA ADMIT YOU CAN SLING IT WITH THE BEST OF THEM.
HEY, MAYBE WE SHOULD START CALLIN' HIM STALKER. HA, HA!
YOU'VE BEEN PULLIN' OUR CHAINS WITH THAT CROCK EVER SINCE YOU JOINED UP!
HEY, IF YOU DIDN'T WANT THE LONG VERSION YOU SHOULDN'T OF ASKED.
BATTLE STATIONS!
LOWERING BLAST DOOR.
SADDLE UP, KIDS!
PREPARE FOR IMMEDIATE HOSTILE CONTACT.
OKAY, BUCKAROOS--
I STILL THINK YOUR STORY IS A CROCK!
YEAH, SO?!
WELL, JUST IN CASE-- I'M STICKIN' WITH YOU!

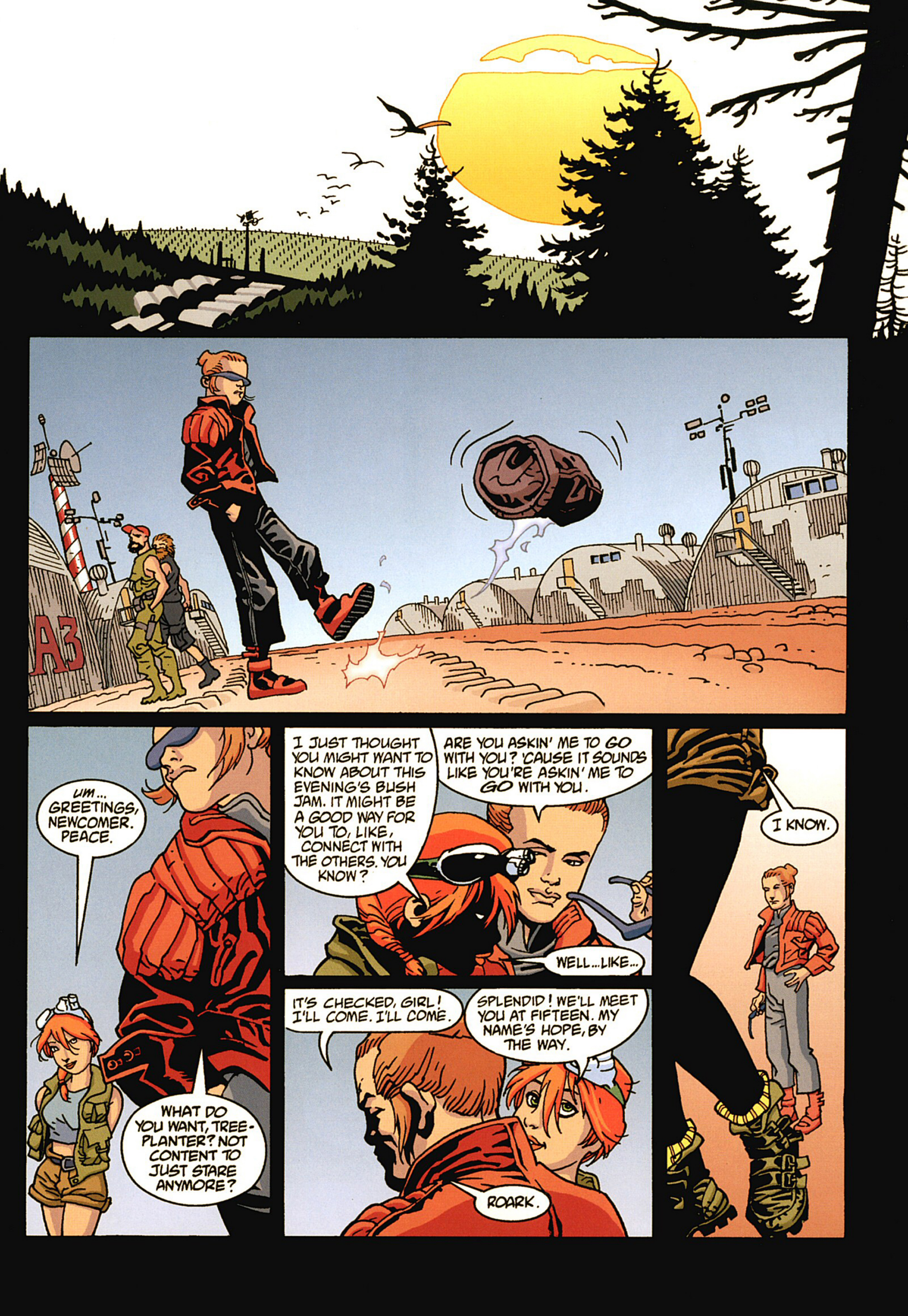
STALKER

script and art
DAVID WENZEL

lettering
TRACEY MUNSEY

title illustration
DAVID WENZEL

THE FOURTH GENERATION AGRI-COLONY AT TIRGU-MIRES...
CHIGUSA Corp
143
143
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU OUTPOSTERS LOOKIN' AT, HMN? NEVER SEEN A MIGRANT BEFORE, OR WHAT?!?
COME, ROARK. NEVER MIND THEM. IT'S GOING TO TAKE TIME...


UM... GREETINGS, NEWCOMER. PEACE.
WHAT DO YOU WANT, TREE-PLANTER? NOT CONTENT TO JUST STARE ANYMORE?
I JUST THOUGHT YOU MIGHT WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THIS EVENING'S BUSH JAM. IT MIGHT BE A GOOD WAY FOR YOU TO, LIKE, CONNECT WITH THE OTHERS. YOU KNOW?
ARE YOU ASKIN' ME TO GO WITH YOU? 'CAUSE IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE ASKIN' ME TO GO WITH YOU.
WELL...LIKE...
IT'S CHECKED, GIRL! I'LL COME. I'LL COME.
SPLENDID! WE'LL MEET YOU AT FIFTEEN. MY NAME'S HOPE, BY THE WAY.
ROARK.
I KNOW.
A3

SHA LA LALAH
PARTAKE, BROTHER?
HMN.
ARE YOU LOCALS ALWAYS THIS SUCKING POLITE?
TIRGU-MIRES IS A DISTANT COUSIN TO THE URBAN ZONES YOU ARE TUNED TO. IN TIME YOU SHALL SUCCUMB TO ITS CALMING INFLUENCE, BROTHER. HAVE PATIENCE.
WHAT IS THIS? HERBAL? PTOO!
SO LET ME GET THIS LEVEL. YOU TREEPLANTERS GET THRILLED BY SITTIN' AROUND A FIRE SINGING AND DRINKING COLD TEA. IS THAT IT? I MEAN, HOW DO YOU EVEN STAY AWAKE?

NO NEED FOR AGGRESSION, BROTHER. IF YOUR AIM IS TO "GET THRILLED," THERE IS AN *INFAMOUS CAVE* NEARBY I'LL BE GLAD TO SHOW YOU.
BATIK! NO!
Ho-hum.
DO NOT CONFRONT, BATIK. YOU ARE SENDING A NEGATIVE VIBE.
NO LESS THAN *TWELVE YOUTHS* HAVE VANISHED FOREVER INTO THE CAVE, INCLUDING A BROTHER WE KNEW CALLED SPECS, JUST LAST ANNUM.
HE WANTED TO PROVE EVERYONE WRONG BY SPENDING A NIGHT INSIDE.
"SNAP!" GONE, JUST LIKE THAT. AND THE COLONIALS WOULD NOT EVEN DARE TO ATTEMPT A RESCUE. YOU SEE, BROTHER ROARK, THOUGH OUR ADULTS LIKE TO REASON THAT THE PLACE IS SIMPLY *STRUCTURALLY UNSAFE*, THE TRUTH IS THAT THEY ALSO *SECRETLY BELIEVE*.
IN WHAT, HMN?
THE WRAITH.
TUNE HIM OUT, ROARK. --YES.
NO ONE HAS EVER SEEN THE WRAITH.
I HAVE! A WHITE GIANT! A *SKELETAL MONSTER!* HAUNTING THE CAVE, AWAITING ITS NEXT VICTIM!
WHAT A BAG OF FERTILIZER.

FINE. LET'S GO.
ARE YOU IMPAIRED, OUTPOSTER? I SAID, "LET'S GO!" TAKE ME TO THE CAVE!
CALM YOURSELF, BROTHER. JUST LET US PUT OUT THE FIRE... WE WILL TAKE YOU.
OOOH! FRIGHTENING! heh heh heh!
WEYLAND YUTANI

SEE YOU COURAGEOUS TREEPLANTERS LATER. DON'T BOTHER SAVING ANY OF THAT DISGUSTING DRINK FOR ME, EITHER.
ROARK! WAIT! DO NOT ATTEMPT TO PROVE YOURSELF! THE CAVE IS TRULY DANGEROUS! PEOPLE ACTUALLY--
HE'S REALLY GOING!
SUPERSTITIOUS LOCALS...

OH, NO...

AAAAH!
SUCK! YOU FRIGHTENED THE HELL OUTTA ME, HOPE!
I...I DIDN'T MEAN TO...I WAS JUST, LIKE -- WORRIED, AND--
--OH GOD. IT'S SPECS.
THIS "WRAITH" IS MORE THAN JUST A SCARY LEGEND, HOPE. I READ ABOUT THESE THINGS.
ALIENS DO THIS... BIG, SLEEK...THEY... THEY...
ATTACK YOU! AND THEN...
IT'S HOW THEY REPRODUCE, GLUING YOU UP LIKE THIS IN FRONT OF THEIR EGGS... THE YOUNG GROWING INSIDE YOU UNTIL THEY BURST OUT THROUGH YOUR CHEST!

MMM... ROARK?
YES, HOPE, YES!
WHERE ARE THE EGGS?
HMN. I DON'T KNOW.
DO YOU THINK THESE "ALIENS" ARE STILL ALIVE DOWN HERE?
I DUNNO. COULD BE. THEY'RE TOUGH. HOW 'BOUT WE DON'T WAIT TO FIND OUT.
HSSSSSS
WHAT?

HISSSSSSSs
OH! ICK!
BUST IT, HOPE!

CHECK! IT'S NOT SO FAST.
IT LOOKED SICK...OLD.
BUT NOT TOO OLD TO KILL THOSE OTHERS. COME ON. WE'VE GOTTA GET BACK AROUND TO THE WAY WE CAME IN.

SHHH!
ARE YOU SURE THIS IS--
IT'S GETTING CLOSER. AND I DON'T WANT TO END UP IN A DEAD END WITH THAT THING ON OUR TAIL, SLOW OR NOT.
ERRRT
BING
PITTA PITTA PITTA PITTA
THUP
THUP
THROUGH HERE! COME ON!
TRUK
THAT'S IT.

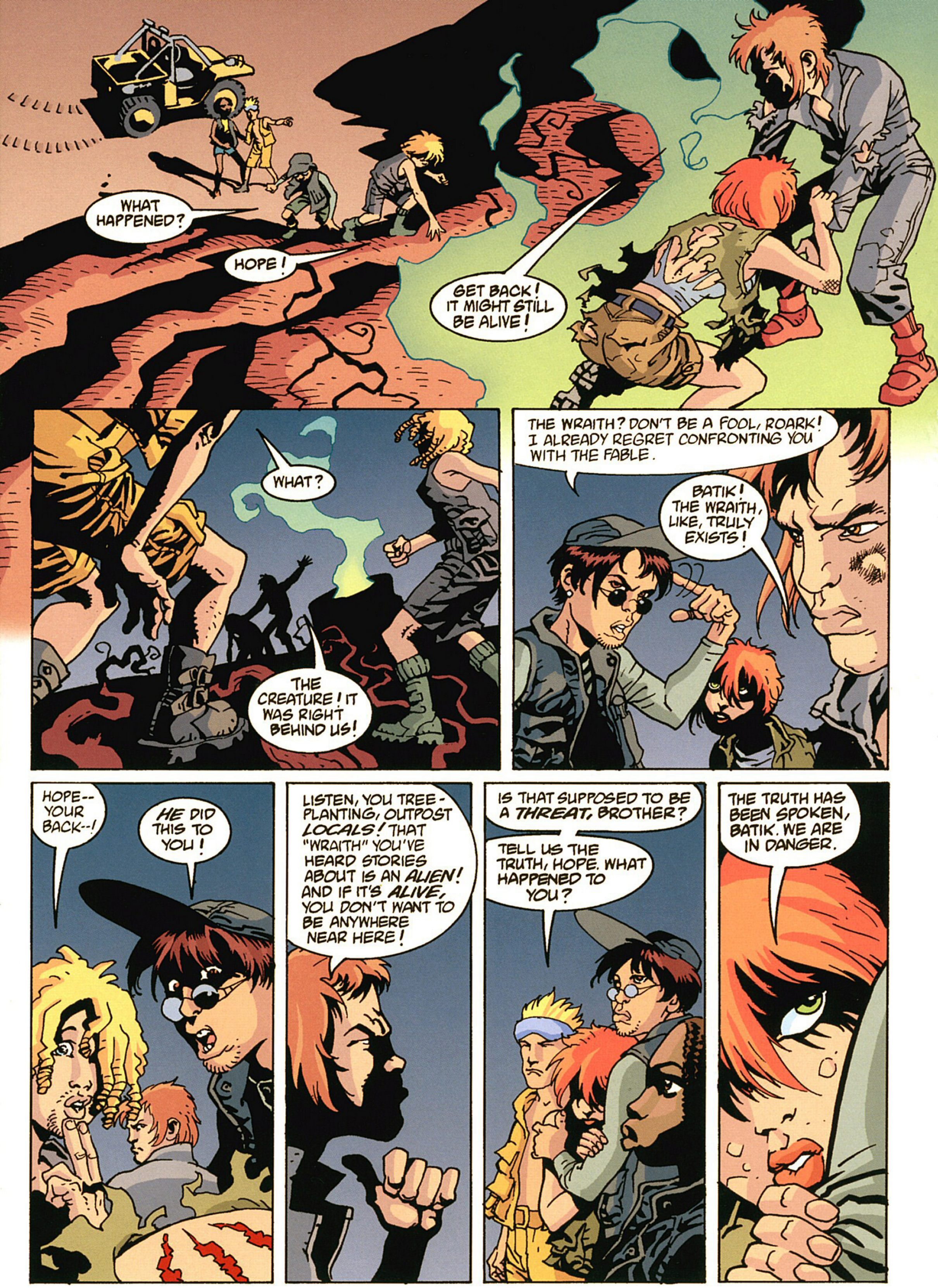
I THINK WE LOST IT. LIKE, THERE'S NO WAY IT'LL FIT THROUGH THERE.
AAH!
HEY!
HSSSSSSSS
SUCK ON THIS, UGLY!
RREEIK

AW, CRAP...
HISSS
THIS WAY, ROARK! OVER HERE!

WHAT THE HELL IS THIS SKUNKY JUICE? IT SMELLS LIKE A SEPTIC PLANT IN HERE!
HURRY!
IT'S COMING!
I--I DROPPED THE TORCH--

SKREEEK
SKREEEK
THAT WAS LUCKY.
WE HAVE TO GET OUT! THE CHEMICAL SMOKE-- KAFF!
KAFF KAFF DON'T PANIC!
THERE! THAT'S OUR WAY OUT OF THIS SUCK-HOLE!
KAFF

HURRY, HOPE! WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME! THIS PLACE IS GONNA LIGHT UP GOOD!
HERE IT COMES!!
KAFF KAFF
GAG!


WHAT HAPPENED?
HOPE!
GET BACK! IT MIGHT STILL BE ALIVE!
WHAT?
THE CREATURE! IT WAS RIGHT BEHIND US!
THE WRAITH? DON'T BE A FOOL, ROARK! I ALREADY REGRET CONFRONTING YOU WITH THE FABLE.
BATIK! THE WRAITH, LIKE, TRULY EXISTS!
HOPE-- YOUR BACK--!
HE DID THIS TO YOU!
LISTEN, YOU TREE-PLANTING, OUTPOST LOCALS! THAT "WRAITH" YOU'VE HEARD STORIES ABOUT IS AN ALIEN! AND IF IT'S ALIVE, YOU DON'T WANT TO BE ANYWHERE NEAR HERE!
IS THAT SUPPOSED TO BE A THREAT, BROTHER?
TELL US THE TRUTH, HOPE. WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?
THE TRUTH HAS BEEN SPOKEN, BATIK. WE ARE IN DANGER.

I GUESS THE FIRE REALLY DID IT IN...

AARRRGHH--H--H
SKREE
AIEEE!
OH, NOOO!
BOOM

THANK HEAVEN! MARINES!
STAY WHERE YOU ARE FOR THE MOMENT, PLEASE. YOU ARE OFFICIALLY UNDER QUARANTINE.
WE HAVE SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU. ANSWER AS BEST YOU CAN, AND THIS'LL ALL BE OVER BEFORE YOU KNOW IT.
HOW MANY OF YOU WERE INSIDE?
JUST THE TWO OF US.
WERE THERE ANY OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED? IS THIS EVERYBODY?
WE ARE ALL ACCOUNTED FOR, BROTHER.
GLAD TO HEAR IT.
THE PROBLEM HAS BEEN ADJUSTED, SIR. HAVE "TEAM TWO" TARGET THE COLONY AT YOUR DISCRETION. WE'RE HEADING TO THE SITE NOW.
UNDERSTOOD.

WRAITH
Rdel Carmen

script
JAY STEPHENS

art
EDUARDO RISSO

colors
CHRIS CHALENOR

lettering
CLEM ROBINS

title illustration
RONNIE DEL CARMEN with **CHRIS CHALENOR** and **DARK HORSE DIGITAL**

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Mankind has fought for survival over countless millennia, but nothing has threatened humanity's existence like the murderous Alien scourge. While some have tried to use the creatures' deadly abilities to serve their own selfish ends, no one can dance with the devil, and ultimately only one species must prevail. To that end, men have turned their own lethal instincts and cold intellect against the monsters, creating engineered plagues, cybernetic fighting suits, and even bogus android aliens; however survival rides not on technology, but on the primacy of the most deeprooted, feral instincts.

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